Families and State Housing:
Ideals, Practices, Change and Problems, 1936-1973

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Contents

Abstract

This study examines successive New Zealand government's involvement in state housing between 1936 and 1973 and the impact and implications this had on tenants in a social context. The state house building programme was commenced as an attempt to resolve several concurrent economic and social problems. Contemporary ideas of organic planning, environmental determinism and the role of the nuclear family were incorporated into the houses' designs. As a component of a social welfare policy, state housing operated to reward the deserving respectable worker and his family, and after the war returned servicemen and other young respectable families. Apparently prescriptive post-war promotional literature has implied that the houses and their locations were designed to encourage and promote respectable young nuclear families. Since then, state housing policy has been subjected to changes. State housing tenants and former tenants were interviewed. The objective of the interviews was to gain an understanding of how their families interacted, through work and play, with their houses and environments, and to understand the extent to which their families' lives and practices were influenced by the housing, their suburban settings and the changes in governments' housing policies.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This study looks at the relationship between state housing and tenant families in a social context. Its aim has been to examine the ideologies implied in the design of state housing and and its suburban environment and the governments' policies on housing and through interviews with tenants to examine the relationships and influences these had on the tenant families' lived experiences of state housing.

In 1936 the Labour government embarked on a state housing programme as a vehicle through which a range of social and economic concerns could be addressed. Its vision was that state housing would be a component of its cradle to grave social welfare system. However, state housing was to operate as a reward for the deserving poor, not as relief for the undeserving poor. The state houses' designs and eventually their chosen tenants were the results of an amalgamation of ideas, constraints and compromises. The original intent had been to house the respectable worker and his family but this aim was lost. Fears that Pakeha population growth was static shifted the focus to cater for the housing needs of the young nuclear family. Financial and political considerations also influenced this. The houses' designs and surroundings 'reflected a highly specialised, even inflexible view of family life', and were designed to

foster the growth of a particular type of family: the ideal, nuclear family unit.[1]

Because the new houses were built of quality materials and set on generous sections in a suburban environment, initially their rentals were higher than had been anticipated. In spite of this, demand for them was keen. The ideal tenant family that state housing was designed for was was young. It was assumed that it would be Pakeha, have a working, paid husband, a wife working unpaid in the home and dependent children. Respectable young nuclear families, whose need was most urgent, and who could afford the rent, were given priority access to state housing. War-widows, especially those with children, were given consideration as tenants only after all the servicemen had returned to New Zealand.[2] The allocation of state houses was determined on the basis of allocation committees members' judgement of a prospective tenant's respectability and suitability as a tenant.

After 1950 the ideas and policies related to state housing changed. The new National Government considered that the problem of housing shortages would be best resolved by encouraging and extending home-ownership to young families of moderate means. Prospective tenants were income tested as a means of reducing demand for state housing from medium income families. However demand continued to be unsatisfied. Families who could demonstrate their need for state housing often came from a category the Housing Division defined as 'Problem Families'. These were virtually all those families that did not fit with in the narrow

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[1] Shaw, P., New Zealand Architecture from Polynesian beginnings to 1990, Hodder and Stoughton, Auckland, 1991, p.133.

[2] Buy, Build or Rent, Rehabilitation Department, Wellington, 1946, p.4.

definition of the ideal tenant. Throughout the 1960s state housing was to become associated with large, low income, Maori, single parent or beneficiary families. This study closes in 1973, the year the Domestic Purposes Benefit was introduced, and by which time a pattern was set for state housing's next 20 years.

The idea that tenants could be influenced by their environment draws heavily on the ideas of organic planning and environmental determinism. The ideas central to this are that individuals and families could, by the provision of the ideal environment in a suburban location produce a morally and physically sound work-force. Two ideas related to houses and their families reflect this idea in the context of the inter-war period. The first is from Le Corbusier, the modernist architect, who wrote , *'modern houses are machines for living in'.* This idea was then adapted by the United States sociologist Talcott Parsons, who said that families are *'factories which produce human personality'.*[3] These two expressions reflect not only the faith that the 'machine age' could remedy society's problems, but that the family, as the basic unit of society, was the factory in which that unit could be remodelled.[4]

The underlying premise of this study is that the physical form of state housing carried with it implied ideas about how a family ought to live in their houses. Much of the evidence for this premise is implied and assumed in the designs, the promotional literature and in a contemporary context of ideas prevalent at the time of the inception of state housing.

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[3] Murphy, J., The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement of 1956 and the Politics of Home Ownership in the Cold War, Urban Research Programme, Australian National University, 1995. p.3.

[4] "Labour has a Plan', The Labour Party Manifesto', 1935, in D. McIntyre, and W.J. Gardner, eds, Speeches and Documents on New Zealand History, 1971, p. 318.

Ben Schrader's thesis 'Planning Happy Families: A History of the Naenae Idea' examines the ideas behind the state-built suburb of Naenae.[5] Naenae was conceived as a community in which to raise 'happy families'. Ideas on town and community planning culminated in plans for a community centre. This never eventuated. In analysing the ideas behind the planned community centre, Schrader showed that the ideology behind Naenae was at odds with other concepts inherent in the community's design. The focus on housing individual families encouraged and protected the privacy of the family in the private home but also acted to discourage ideas of community. Although Schrader originally intended to examine the ways in which families experienced their community, this became beyond the scope of his thesis. Schrader's thesis is valuable. His examination of the ideology behind the physical form of state houses has indicated the possible areas of contention that inhabitants may have had with their houses and surroundings.

Gael Ferguson's, Building the New Zealand Dream, traces the history of state involvement in housing.[6] As the book's title suggests, pursuit of the 'dream house' was promoted as an important aspect of creating the ideal family environment. The state house was merely a state-owned alternative for those unable to achieve ownership of the 'dream'. New Zealand has had two distinct housing policies: that of supporting private ownership of houses, and that of state ownership of rental housing. Both policies have vied for supremacy under different governments. The promotion of the individual family home, either privately or state owned, has been used as a means to boost or dampen the economy. Although Ferguson identifies

[5] Schrader, B., 'Planning Happy Families: A History of the Naenae Idea', Unpublished thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1993.

[6] Ferguson, G., Building the New Zealand Dream, Dunmore Press Limited, Palmerston North, 1994.

and draws attention to the social impact of these policies, a detailed analysis of these is not been the purpose of the book but it is an excellent source of ideological and policy material.

This study has avoided using any language of class, because class issues and analysis have not been considered important or necessary to the focus of the work. Graeme Dunstall has written that:

> Housing patterns suggest, then, that the urban social structure became increasingly complex after 1945. Perceptions of social rank became even more ambiguous, unable to be explained in simple class terms. ...Rather the general absence of a language of class suggests that until the late 1960s there was a prevailing belief in social mobility, in a society of 'fair shares', and in a common mean in lifestyles.[7]

The tenants interviewed did not use a language of class to describe socio-economic differences. These ideas were instead expressed as social values, and were expressed as, 'respectable' and 'rough' and on one occasion, 'common'. In addition to the opposing ideas of 'respectable' and 'rough' there were similar ideas of 'transience' used to describe short-term tenants, or 'fly-by-nighters'. The fly-by-nighters' vices existed in opposition to the virtues of the 'established' residents, who saw themselves as having more status on account of the length of time that they had lived in the one house. Miles Fairburn notes that, in the nineteenth century contemporaries used as terms of social description 'settler' and 'drifter', rather than the terms 'working class' or 'middle class'.[8]

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[7] Dunstall, G., 'The Social Pattern', in W. H. Oliver with B. R. Williams, eds, The Oxford History of New Zealand, Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1988, p. 406.

[8] Fairburn, M., The Ideal Society and its Enemies: The Foundation of Modern New Zealand Society, 1850-1900, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1989, p.126.

The idea of settlers and itinerants are mirrored in the use of terms of 'established' tenants as opposed to 'fly-by-nighters'.

Tenants and former tenants were interviewed in order to examine their experiences. The central question in the interviews has been to determine to what extent the residents practised, adapted to, or resisted the vision of the planners in the context of their relationships with their houses, families, neighbours and neighbourhoods. Tenants were asked how they worked, relaxed and played, socialised with their neighbours, and raised their children. The remembered experiences of children were sought, as it had been their welfare that had been central to the political justification of state housing. It was anticipated that the central issues that would be raised in the interviews would pivot around domestic issues. This suggested that tensions and their consequences within a private home, and in its relationship with its neighbourhood, would be bound up in ideas of appropriate behaviour. Within the setting of this study it was considered that assigned roles and models of behaviour would be particular to men, women and children. With this in mind, the secondary reading has explored the roles of men, women and children in suburban housing.

Linda McDowell has claimed that:

> It was surely no coincidence that the vast programmes of peripherally located single-family state and private housing were related to women's post-war withdrawals from the labour market.[9]

The design of state housing encouraged women to stay at home and focus their attention on the domestic sphere. Theoretical ideas about the

[9] McDowell, L., 'Towards an understanding of the gender divisions of urban space', in Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, volume 1, 1983, pp 59-72.

gendered nature of urban space have been often grounded in a Marxist tradition. These ideas propose that western cities have been sexually segregated by the separation of work from home: the male domain is the city workplace and the female domain is in the home.[10] Dolores Hayden has argued that the gender associations in this division handicap both men and women and that the creation of individual houses on individual suburban lots acted as a barrier to women attempting to enter the workplace located in the city. This is reinforced by the apparent hostility towards women when they leave the private space and enter the public workplace.[11] Although it has been demonstrated that gender roles were inherent in state suburban planning, these ideas assume that suburban gender segregation was problematic.

Because state housing was designed and built by men, it should have, theoretically, been close to an ideal home environment for men. However, as Jock Phillips has written, 'when men finished their work for the day they entered a family environment ruled over by a mother who was not in paid employment.'[12] The suburban houses designated as a domestic sphere for women and children also carried spaces for men. Promotional literature implied that the tool shed, the vegetable garden and the lounge room were designed with the head of the family in mind, although men may not have been comfortable with their assigned roles and spaces in the suburban home.

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[10] See for example, S. Cox and B. James, 'The Theoretical Background', in S. Cox, ed., Public & Private Worlds: Women in Contemporary New Zealand Society, Allen and Unwin, Wellington, 1987.

[11] Hayden, D., Redesigning the American Dream, WW Norton, New York, 1984.

[12] Phillips, J., A Man's Country: The Image of the Pakeha Male, Penguin Books, New Zealand, 1987, p.226.

Daphne Spain demonstrated that rooms within a house are also gender segregated along public and private space lines.[13] A room's function dictates whether or not it is public or private, or a male or female space. Economies of design in state houses had collapsed the divisions between public and private spaces. For example, the dining room, traditionally a public male space, became incorporated with the private female space of the kitchen. Rooms were designed to be function-specific: the kitchen/dining room was for cooking and eating, the bedrooms for sleeping and the lounge room for relaxing. After 1950, when tenant families became larger, this may have imposed strains. A room's function may have altered to cope with the constraints of space. Within the interviews it was anticipated that the subjects would reveal problems they had with their houses and suburbs and areas where their families would reveal tensions or demonstrate some form of resistance to the planners' ideas of nuclear family housing. Interviews with former tenants' children were also sought, as it was hoped that they might provide another perspective of the family home and its neighbourhood.

Chapter 2 contains a discussion about the tenants and the interviews. It examines the problems encountered which may have influenced the content of the study. In particular, the motivations of respondents for being interviewed may be significant and may present a biased perspective. Within this chapter the tenants are introduced by their initials. Details of their tenancy years, their family sizes and the location of their tenancy is given. The following chapters form the main body of the study and have two main components. The first component is

[13] Spain, D., Gendered Spaces, University of North Carolina Press, 1992.

contained in chapters 3 and 5, and examines the policies and ideologies that shaped state housing, and changes to these, in a social context.

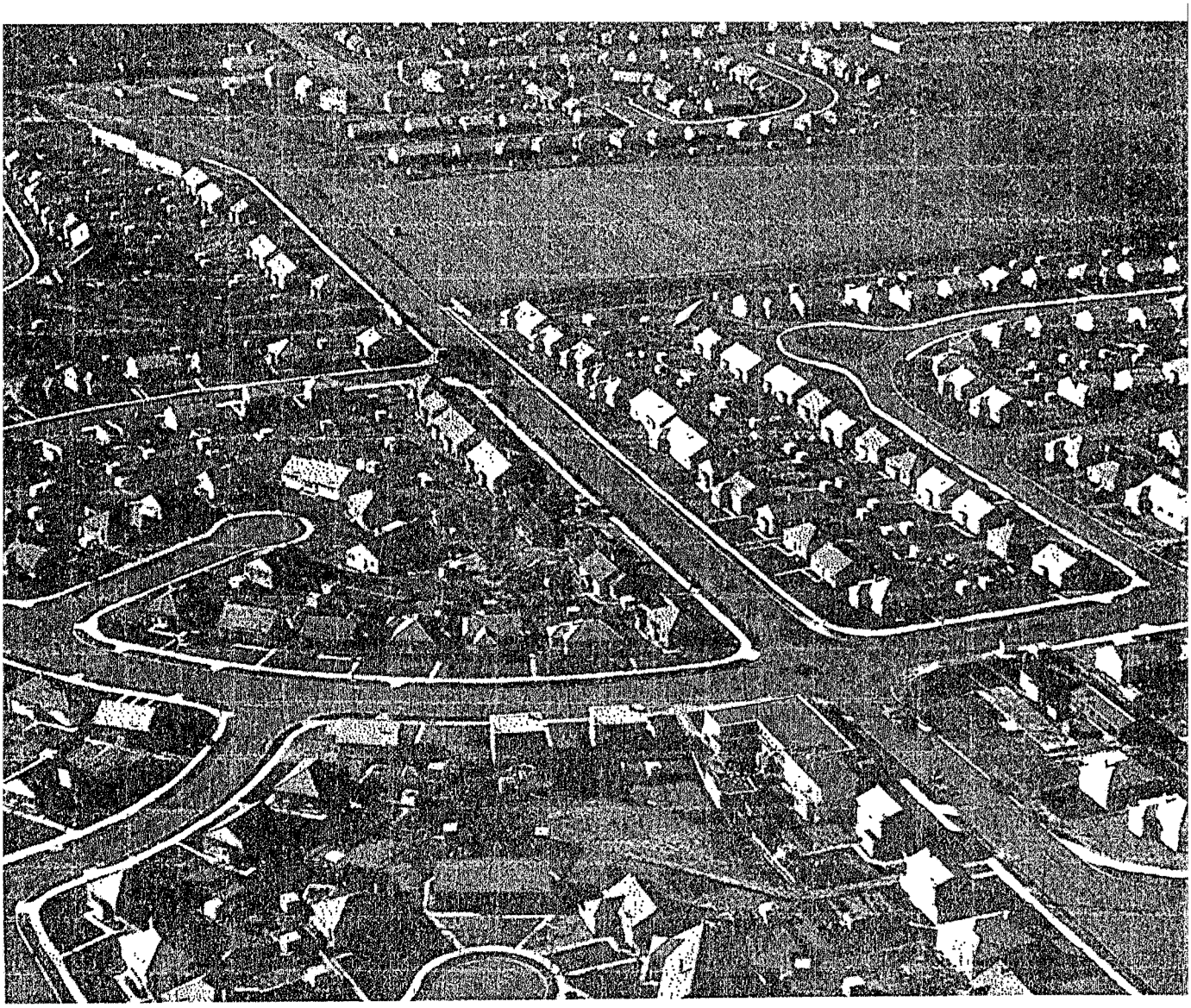
Chapter 3 looks at the period between 1936 and 1949 and the Labour Government's role in the planning of state housing and the conglomeration of ideas that influenced their design and contributed to their realised physical form. This is done through the use of primary sources, such as archived material from the State Advances Corporation, and its ancillary branch, the Housing Division held at the National Archives in Wellington. Secondary literature is also used for additional material and analysis.

The findings of this study are contained in chapters 4 and 6. The first part of the second component is contained in chapter 4. This chapter examines the interview material that relates to the tenants' experiences and relationships, in the years between 1936 and 1954, in order to ascertain how they lived in their houses, and to examine aspects of compliance with or resistance to the implied prescriptive nature of the housing and neighbourhoods. The study found evidence that the families interviewed were, overall, happy with their houses and their suburbs. They did make efforts to resist the planners' ideas that their front gardens should be part of a 'community whole' and used the kitchen as a family gathering place rather than the lounge as planned. Otherwise the tenants' experiences conveyed the idea that the planners had accurately catered for their needs and had tailored the state houses to the tenants' tastes, needs and aspirations, rather than vice versa. The evidence did not suggest that the families had significantly altered their practices to accommodate the ideas implied in the designs.

Chapter 5 is in two parts and examines the policies, ideology and outcomes in the years after 1949, when the National Government significantly altered its approach to the housing problem. The changes had implications for tenants and altered the ideas which surrounded state houses and their tenants. Between 1957 and 1960 a return to a Labour Government did not bring a significant return to the original vision for state housing. Although this chapter looks at state rental housing, attention is also given to private home-ownership. Preliminary reading and interviews suggested that the changes that occurred within state housing were caused by factors beyond the ideas and the policies of governments. Changes were occurring within the wider community. The second part of chapter 5 looks at the social changes after 1950 that were of particular relevance to the families in state housing.

The interview material which relates to the period 1955 to 1973 is discussed in chapter 6. The interviews with tenants in both periods revealed that families were affected by the experience of living in a state house. The tenants, while not necessarily expressing an awareness of the ideas which had formed a background to their environment, were conscious that aspects of the design and its associated ideologies were at odds with and were the source of tensions in their self perception and their relationships with their families and neighbours. The changes in the ideologies and policies concerning the role of state housing in New Zealand had changed over the period of this study. So had the tenants. Those houses which had been designed for members of the ideal nuclear family remained, but by 1973, they held families with little in common with the narrow definition of family they had been designed for. Not surprisingly perhaps, the tenants from this period were less satisfied with their houses and environments.

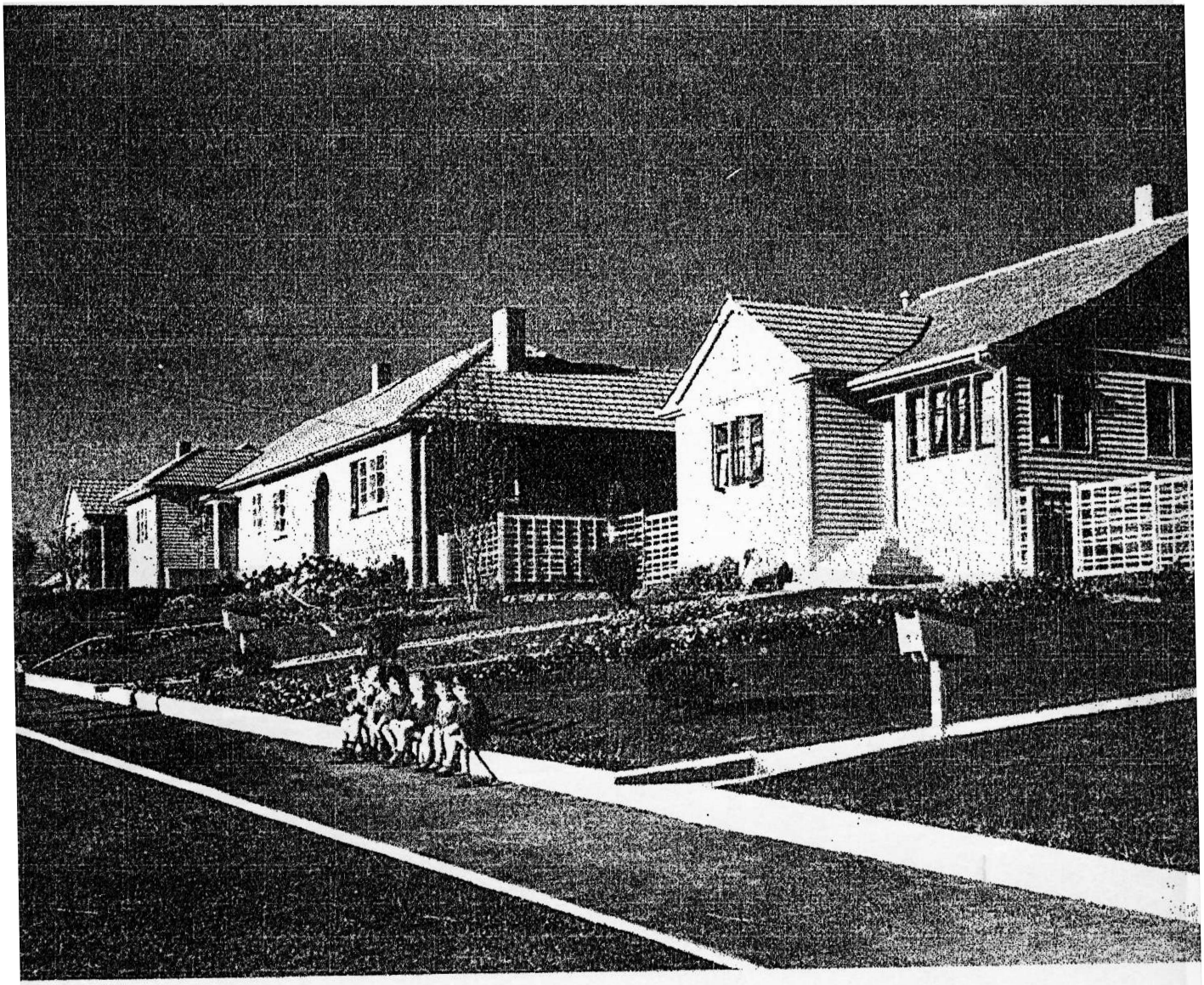
The following illustrations and text are from State Housing in New Zealand.[14]



Variety

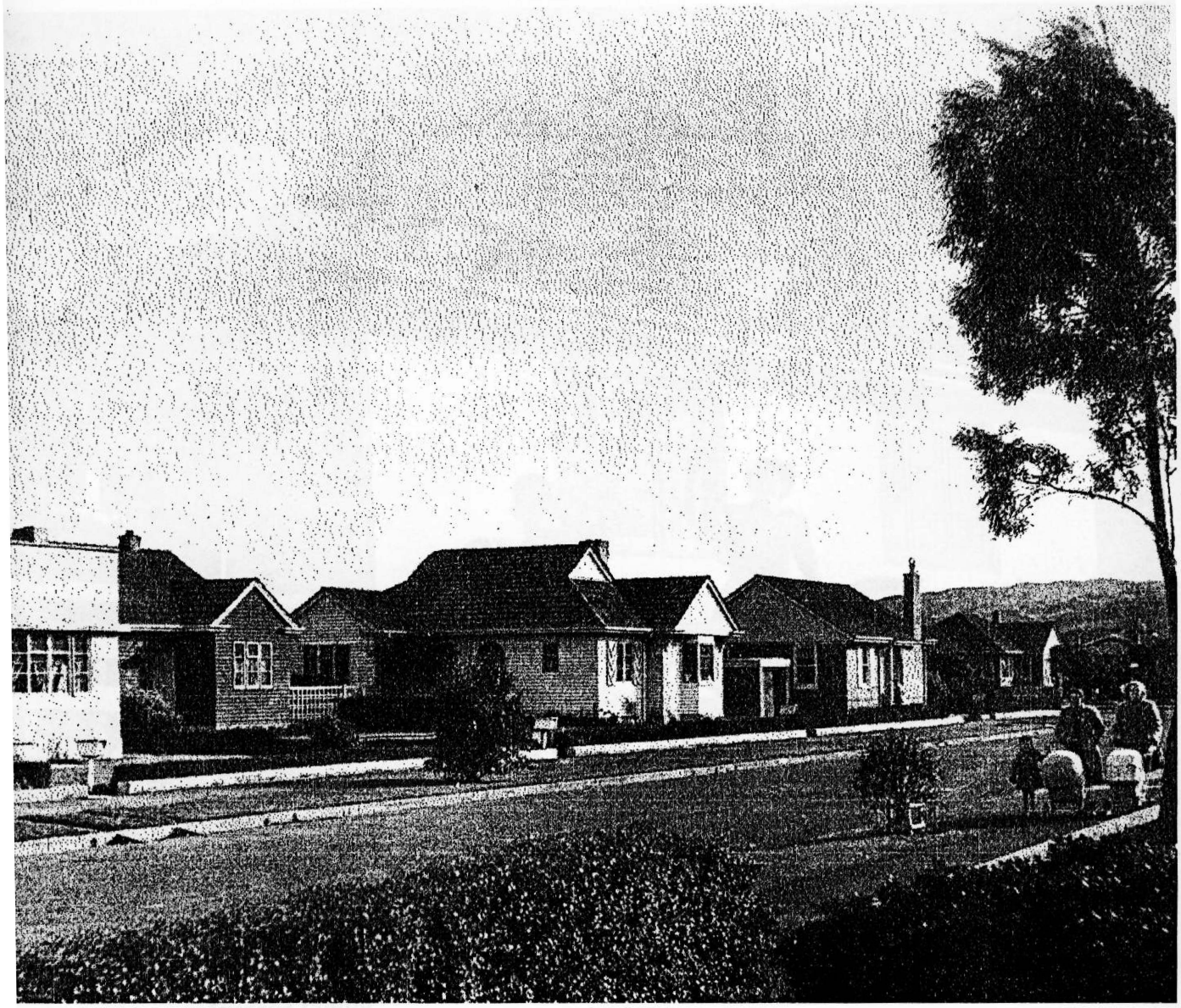
Orthodox grid street-pattern is replaced by curved streets, loops, recessed courts, culs-de sac. Traffic diverted into defined routes, keeps residential streets free from danger, dirt noise: saves cost in construction and maintenance. Pleasing street pattern eliminates monotony

[14] State Housing in New Zealand, R. E. Owen, Government Printer, Wellington, 1949/50.



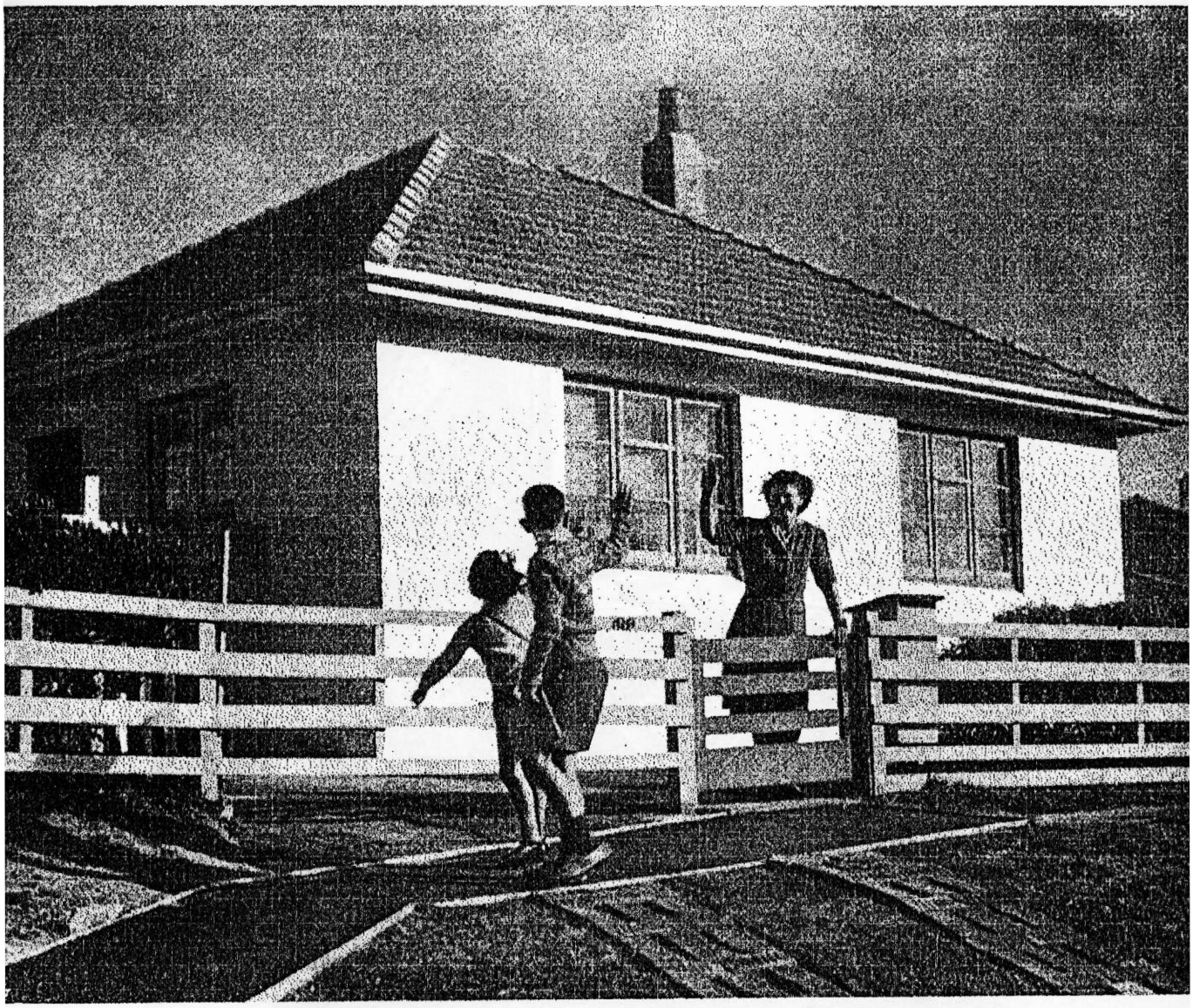
Space

House sections are large. On flat land houses are set back 25ft. to 50ft. from the front boundary. Average frontages are 53ft., minimum boundaries 5ft. from the house on one side and 9ft. on the other. Four-fifths of the houses are fully detached. Housewives have excellent laundry facilities and houses are complete with clothes-lines, paths and essential services. Rear part of the section gives room for vegetable garden: is safe, secluded play-area for children.



Individuality

Effective use of brick and weatherboards lends individuality to houses of almost identical design. Although basic plans are used for state houses variety is achieved in external design by the choice of different wall sheathings and roof materials, colours, changed positions for porches and windows. Forty per cent. of State houses are finished in timber. 25 per cent. in brick.



Average family

Greatest demand is for three-bedroom houses – for average two-child family. Demand is assessed from surveys of average size, analysis of requirements of 45,000 applicants for State homes. House sizes are generous; 882 square feet for two-bedroom, 1055 for three-bedroom, 1,245 square feet for four-bedroom houses. sixty-seven per cent. are built with three bedrooms, twenty per cent. with two.

Kitchen

Convenient work space is a feature of the State house kitchen. Surroundings are bright and cheerful and work is saved by the provision of electrical facilities, hot water and plenty of cupboards. Kitchens are arranged to capture morning sun, have attractive colour schemes. tenant survey showed preference for meal space in the kitchen. Weekly rents are from 17s 6d for one bedroom to 32s. 6d. for four-bedroom houses. Tenants receive rebate for correct care of home.

Family centre

Attention given to the living-room in design of State houses is a practical illustration of the aim to keep the family together as a unit. Social and recreational centre for at least half the year, the State house lounge is warm, roomy, and comfortable, fills all requirements as a family gathering place. Tenant's responsibility is to keep the house clean and tidy, but repairs and maintenance are done by the State Advances Corporation.

Chapter 2

The Interviews

The interviews that form the primary sources for chapters 4 and 6 were sought with the intent to gain primary material in order to ascertain how the sample families lived in state houses. Twenty-nine people were interviewed. Because of the apparently prescriptive nature of state housing's design, it was theorised that the interviewee's experiences should reflect aspects of that ideology. The purpose of the interviews was to gather evidence in order to understand whether or not tenants' experiences were parallel to, or diverged from, the ideology. Preliminary reading and archival research had provided an indication of some of the issues that could have been raised by the respondents.

Finding the interviewees was initially difficult. Many of the original tenants are now elderly. Few still lived in their original state houses. Word of mouth brought a slow response and the hoped for snowball effect from this failed to bring forward the quantity of people required. Requests for subjects for interviews from the Returned Servicemen's Association and Age Concern yielded little response. A suggestion that 'talk back radio' could provide subjects was acted upon and brought an immediate and overwhelming response. A later request on the same radio show for tenants from the 1960s brought forward more respondents from this period. Few adult tenants came forward for the years following 1960. It initially seemed unfortunate that the adult respondents from this period were not in similar age cohorts as those from the earlier period. I was disappointed that I could not get more young couples with children

coming forward but eventually surmised that the interviewees were probably representative of the mix of tenants in state housing in the 1960s. Only four interviewees from this period went into state housing as young married couples.

The reasons for this are unclear, but given that state housing did tend to cater for young married couples with children. An area such as Christchurch's Emmett Block in Shirley would not have housed a wide spread of ages in its early development. Residents would have tended to form part of either the adults' cohort or that of the children's cohort. By the 1960s it appears that those families whose tenancy began in the early and mid 1950s still lived in their houses. Few houses would have been available for new families to begin their tenancy experience. Also, during the 1960s, young families were finding it relatively easier to build or buy houses of their own. The proportion of the population looking for state housing would have been lower than in the immediate post-war years. Given this, it is possible that the sample's tenancy patterns may be broadly representative of Christchurch's state housing tenancy patterns during this period.

Both adult tenants and children were required in the sample. The remembered experiences of adults as children were sought because they, as children, may have been affected by prescriptive practices in ways that their parents had not been. It may be argued that the remembered experiences of children are not the same as their actual experience. The interviewees seemed to understand this and frequently commented themselves in interviews when their perspectives had shifted from that of a child to that of an adult. One respondent, JD, had lived in a state house as a child of tenants and later as a married woman with children. Some of

the older interviewees suggested that their grown up children be contacted when it was explained that a two generational response would be helpful to the research.

Because ten of the respondents lived in the Emmett Block a brief description of that area follows. This block of state houses is neither the largest or the oldest state housing area in Christchurch. The Emmett Block was developed in the immediate post-war period. Initially 517 'units' were planned for in July 1946, but the area today suggests that number was exceeded.[1] The block was developed from the southern end, which was closest to the city and its services, in a northerly direction. Because one of the respondents moved into a new house in 1957, and newer houses were built to the north of her house, it seems that the block's development occurred over a fifteen year period. The block encompasses a rectangular area between Shirley Road, Hills Road, Marshland Road and Briggs Road in the north-west of Christchurch. Prior to its development, the area had been swampy dairy farming land. The area is divided, east and west, by a creek which runs the length of the block, and most of the state houses are located on the western side of this. The areas made available for private house development are located to the east of the creek. The block contains the typical, curved, winding streets, and many full grown trees, especially in the older southern part. The northern part, which was developed later, does not have as many trees and appears relatively bleak compared to the southern end.

The other suburbs which featured in the interviews – Bishopdale, Wainoni and Northcote – contain similar features to the Emmett Block. These suburbs, while not exclusively state housing, have large areas within them

[1] Housing Division, Acc 1353, 3/1/10/1, National Archives.

of state housing and housing built under the Group Housing Scheme to state house plans or similar. They were also built on flat land on the city perimeters. Because these areas were developed at a similar time and for the same profile of tenants (young married couples) they also contained similar population structures of parents and children. In general, these areas have much in common with the Emmett Block.

The interviews were conducted following an initial phone call from a prospective subject when an appointment was made to interview respondents. Many of the respondents were interviewed in their homes. Some of these homes were the same houses as the tenants had moved into in their early married life. Most of the interviews were recorded on tape. Two interviews were conducted on the telephone while notes were taken. These were from former tenants who now lived in the North Island. One respondent did not want to be taped, but instead allowed notes to be taken of the interview. Otherwise the tape records were transcribed to note form in order to facilitate their use and to aid in sorting the material.

All but two respondents were Pakeha. This was to be expected given the Christchurch centred focus of the study. In 1959 it was stated that there were no Maori families living in state houses in Christchurch.[2] This may have not been altogether true as the tenancy could have been held in the name of a Pakeha spouse. The two Maori tenants interviewed were not from Christchurch. One had originally come from a state forestry town in Southland where state housing formed the principal form of accommodation; the other respondent had a Pakeha father and was also from a small South Island town. There were no other apparent ethnic groups represented in the sample.

[2] State Advances Corporation, 35/ 83 pt2, National Archives.

The interviews were informal and the questions were generally open ended. From the outset it was hoped that the results from the interviews would provide the material for the study and that this material would be its focus. It was hoped that by allowing the interviewees to pursue topics that they felt to be important, that issues that had not appeared in the preliminary reading, would be raised. All the respondents were asked background questions such as tenancy years and location, family size, religious affiliation and church attendance, gardening interests and about their use of Plunket's services. Aware that the interview situation is intrusive of private lives, the questions were restricted accordingly. I did not push for a response to a question if indications were given that such questions were intrusive. The purpose of the interviews was to gain an understanding of how families lived in and interacted with the environment. The most difficult question to ask was that concerning disciplinary practices. This was asked of all but two respondents. During this interview, the couple's daughter was present and I felt unable to raise this issue out of concern that those present may have been embarrassed. A follow up interview with the daughter revealed the answer to this question and vindicated my hesitation. The open ended nature of the questions did allow for surprising and interesting issues to emerge that the reading had not suggested would be raised.

Some subjects were explored at length by respondents. In early interviews the temptation was to dismiss these as personally held preoccupations. But when the same subjects were repeatedly raised, it became obvious that these were important issues to the tenanting experience. After I got an indication of what was important or not to the respondents, the questions were modified. For instance, the issues of fencing, allocation procedures

and the impact of television were frequently raised by the interviewees. Thompson wrote that oral historians:

> Find that the people whom they interview do not fit easily into social types presented by the preliminary reading. They need facts, or people, or records which prove tantalisingly elusive. They encounter the problems of bias, contradiction and interpretation in evidence. Above all, they are brought back from the grand patterns of written history to the awkwardly individual human lives which are its basis.[3]

There is no doubt that the respondents in the sample held strong opinions towards the topic. They were not impartial observers of their lives as they had lived the object of this study. These opinions could be described as bias, although in a study of this type it is more meaningful to regard these as perspectives. 'Bias' has connotations of prejudice and distortion, whereas the idea of perspective acknowledges the interviewees right to have different opinions and experiences and to have them valued by the researcher. It has been written that 'to purge research of all these "sources of bias" is to purge research of human life'.[4] This is not the purpose of these interviews. Their purpose has been to encounter a range of human life perspectives and to put people and their experiences into state housing history.

The act of coming forward for an interview indicated that people were influenced by their housing experiences and wanted to share the experience with another for their own reasons. The older tenants, those who had commenced living in their houses in the years prior to 1955, appeared to have two predominant issues that they wanted to discuss and

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[3] Thompson, P, The Voice of the Past, Oxford University Press, Oxford, first published 1978, 1988, p.10.

[4] Thompson, P, quoting Ken Plummer in, TheVoiceof the Past (Second edition),1988 p.117.

which formed their motivation for responding to the request for subjects. These respondents wanted the opportunity to tell their story, and in particular, they wanted to establish that they and their neighbours were respectable people, that their houses and children were well looked after. Most particularly, they wanted to establish that they were *different* to the present state housing tenants.

Janet McCalman has pointed out that a pitfall of oral history is that the history teller is in control of the evidence and can and will select information in order to tell their history in the best possible manner.[5] The information the story teller selects will be that which presents him or her in such a way as he or she wants to be seen. The older married couples, especially the women were anxious to have it known that their lives and houses were, morally and physically, spotless. McCalman has also pointed out that the responsibility to maintain a respectable external appearances fell on women, and that therefore it was possible that the evidence selected by these women would be that which demonstrated this.[6] None of the married women from this period told their stories in such a way as to imply that they were not respectable. Archival and anecdotal evidence has demonstrated that this was not always the case, and that some tenants did not maintain clean, tidy houses and children, but these people either did not present themselves to be interviewed, or suppressed information that did not support their story. When interviewing couples it was predominantly the women who spoke. It is possible that if the husbands were interviewed separately, a different story could have emerged.

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[5] McCalman, J, Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond, 1900-1965, Melbourne University Press,1985. pp182-183.

[6] Ibid.

The children of tenants also appeared to have their own reasons for being interviewed. Some, like their elders, wanted to establish the respectable aspects of their childhoods. Among the younger children, there were distinct attempts to critique elements of their past. Many of these adults saw their younger lives as having been dominated by values that emphasised an external appearance of respectability. From both the younger and older respondents the impression was given that they were selecting information for their own purposes. Again, from the perspective of the children, there appears to be a strong sense that in critiquing the rigidity of their upbringing they themselves were subscribing to a set of values that related to their generation. The children born after the war, in general, were heavily influenced by ideas of individuality and the rejection of many of the previous generation's values. The interview material from the children again supports McCalman's ideas and indicates that the evidence these people selected was that which best supported their values. This again does not falsify the information received, but represents the story teller in a way that he or she wishes to be seen.

The interviewer also brings their own biases or perspectives into a study. They do this by selecting materials and opinions that support the issues that interest them. My interests may be apparent from the interview material, but if not, they are an interconnected threesome of parenting, feminist issues and social politics. I am most grateful to the interviewees for the time they gave to their thoughtful recounting of experiences. Many of the respondents commented, at the conclusion of the interviews, that they had enjoyed thinking and talking about the past. This occurred whether or not they had been critical of their experience.

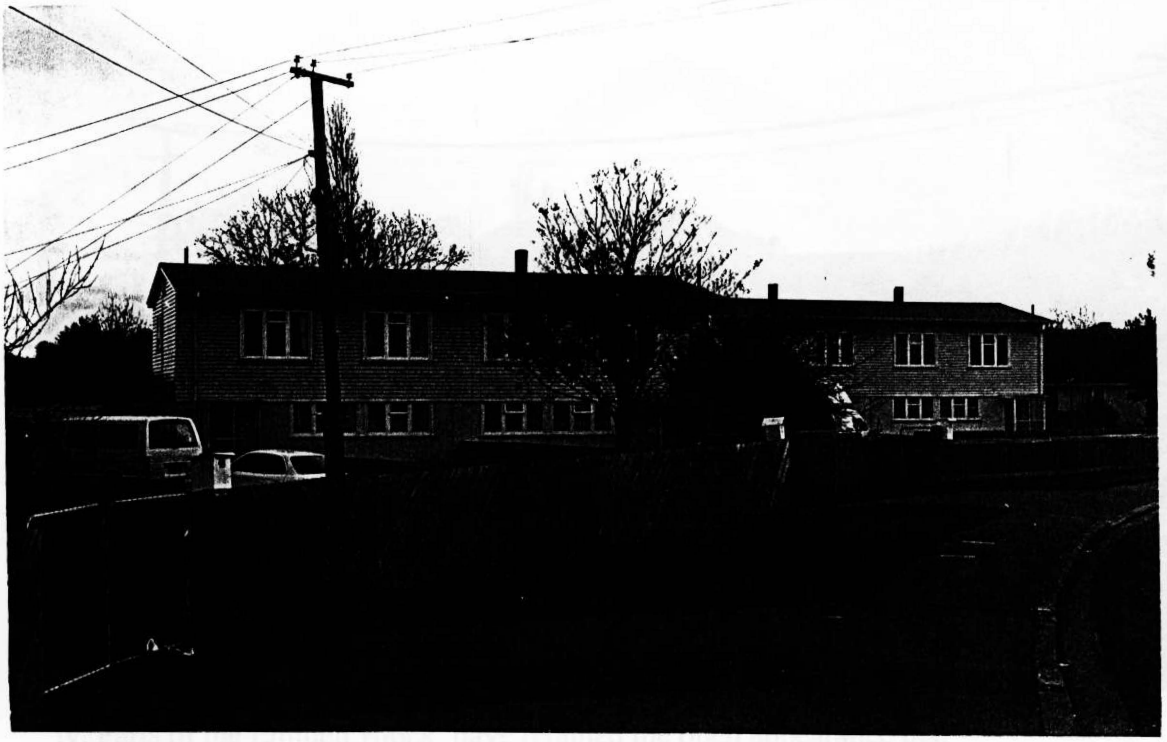
In chapters 4 and 6 the tenants who entered into state housing as married couples have been referred to by their title, Mr or Mrs followed by their family name initial. The exceptions are, Mrs P and Mrs J. Their given name initials are used to save confusion with other family name initials. Those interviewed, who were the children of tenants, are referred to by the initials from their given name and their family name. Hence, JD who lived in a state house as a child, reappears as Mrs J when the material relates to her adult experiences.

The material from the interviews is divided into two periods: that which occurs 1955 and that which relates to the years between 1955 and 1973. The material does not follow the same years covered in chapters 3 and 5 which are neatly divided at 1950 with a change of government and housing policy. The break in the interviews at 1955 occurs at that time for many small reasons which ultimately make a division at that time smoother than it would be at 1950. The first of these reasons is that six of the nine married couples commenced their tenancy in the years before 1955. None of these women worked outside the home, or bought their state houses prior to 1955. 1955 marks a time when the adults' relationship with their houses, children and unpaid work changed. This chronological break also relates to the children's experiences. In the years before 1955, most were pre school age and unlikely to have many memories of those years. The bulk of their remembered experiences occur in the years after 1955.

List of Interviewees

Initials of Name	Tenancy 1936-1973	Members of Household	Locations
JC	1936-46	4	Greymouth
DV	1938-1959	7	Dunedin
Mrs C	1943-1945	4	Waimate
Mrs I	1946-	9	Emmett Block, Ch
HM	1946-	8	Northcote, Ch.
PM	1948-	8	Northcote, Ch
JD	1949-1953	6	Ashburton
Mrs W	1949-	5	Emmett Block, Ch
BL	1949-	5	Emmett Block, Ch
Mr and Mrs H	1950-	4	Wainoni, Ch
JB	1951-	4	Auckland
Mr and Mrs D	1952-	8	Various North Is. locations
WS	1952-1970	6	Dunedin
Mr and Mrs Y	1953-	6	Bishopdale, Ch
JS	1953-	6	Bishopdale, Ch
AH	1953-	15	Tapanui and Dunedin
KA	1954-	6	Emmett Block, Ch
SA	1956-	8	Various North Is. locations
FW	1958-70	6	Oamaru
Mrs P	1957-1970	6	Emmett Block, Ch
MH	1959-	5	Blenheim
Mr S	1958-	3	Dallington, Ch
PC	1958-	5	Bishopdale
LO	1958	9	Emmett Block, Ch
Mrs J	1964-1971	8	Ashburton
Mrs R	1964	4	Wainoni, Ch
LM	1970-	7	Emmett Block, Ch
SM	1970-	7	Emmett Block, Ch

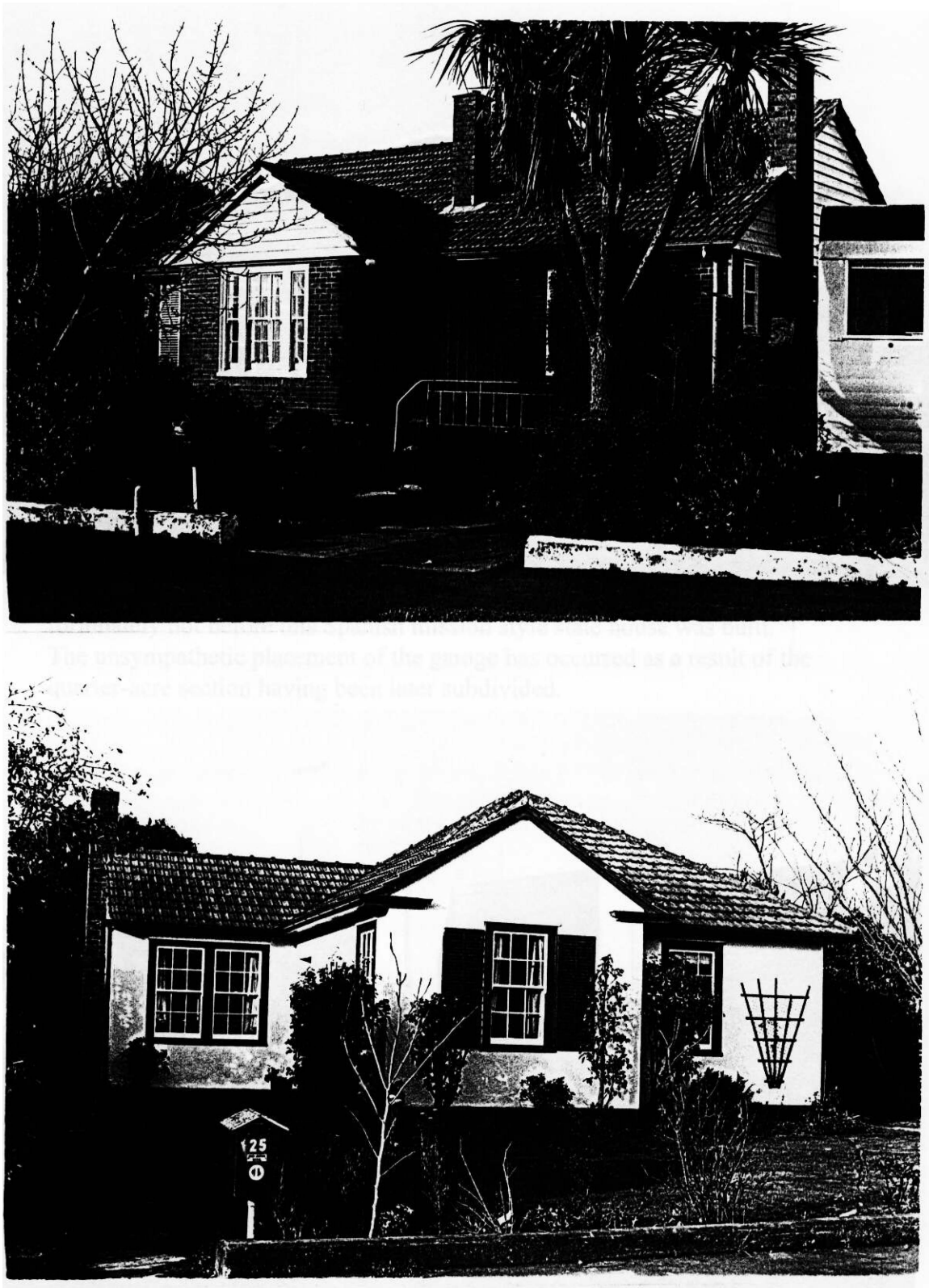
i. These houses were the first built in the Emmett Block. Mrs W lived in a 'fibrolite' house; her neighbours' houses were brick and wood. The houses in this area, built at this time, had tile roofs with a 32 degrees pitch.



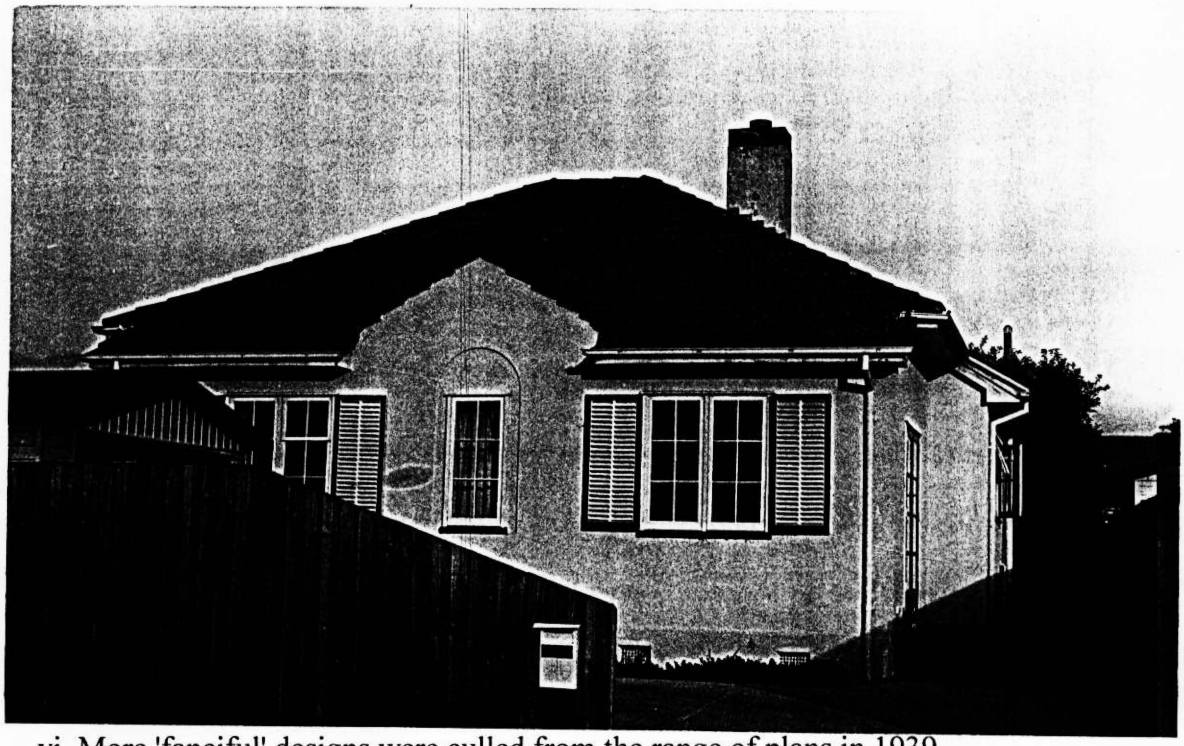
ii. Built in the early 1960s, these units in the north of the Emmett Block reflect the Housing Division's cost cutting measures. Both land and building costs had been reduced with the use of repeated plans, iron roofs, standardised joinery and the multi-unit.

iii. Evidence of the planners' ideas of community planning are seen in Riccarton, the site of Christchurch's first state houses, where fences were eliminated in order to create a 'large community whole'.

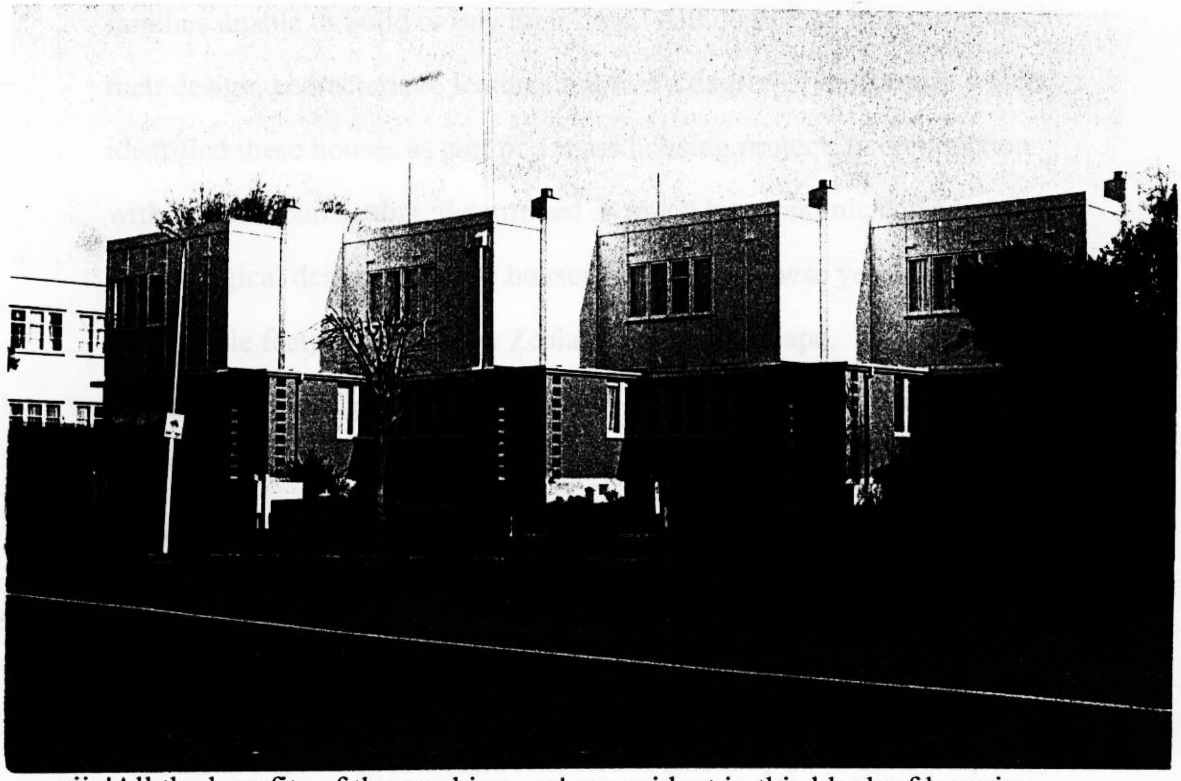
iv. Parts of the Emmett Block have retained the open appearance that planners envisioned would promote 'a community whole'. The closed introverted appearance of the houses, with their small porches and high small windows, encourages private family life inside, rather than outdoor interaction with the community.



v. These houses in Riccarton offer few clues that they are state houses. The low wall in the front is one. The influence of ideas relating to the 'arts and crafts' movement and hence the English cottage is apparent, especially in the use of the double-hung, mullioned, twelve light sash windows.



vi. More 'fanciful' designs were culled from the range of plans in 1939, fortunately not before this Spanish mission style state house was built. The unsympathetic placement of the garage has occurred as a result of the quarter-acre section having been later subdivided.



vii. 'All the benefits of the machine age' are evident in this block of low-rise multi-unit flats. The 'simplified and scientific' functionalist approach is a distinct break from the cottage styles and instead, carries strong European modernist references. The influence of Ernst Plischke and other European- trained architects is apparent in these flats.

Chapter 3

Ideas and Implementation: 1936 - 1949

Between 1936 and 1949, 29,000 state houses were built in New Zealand.[1] Almost 77% of these were single-unit dwellings and 19.45% were double units, disguised to appear as one larger single-unit family home. The balance, less than 5%, were pensioner flats or units containing three or more flats.[2] These single and double-unit houses formed the mass of the state house suburban landscape. They were purpose built 'houses for rental purposes at a figure in keeping with the resources of the people' for families unable to build or buy their own.[3] Although they had variations in their design, characteristic features implied a degree of uniformity which identified these houses as part of a mass housing project. In conjunction with its suburban setting, determined as much by economic considerations as ideological design, the state houses built during these years are a readily identifiable feature of the New Zealand urban landscape. This chapter examines the background to the Labour government's involvement in state housing, the processes it undertook to make a reality of election promises, the ideas that contributed to state houses and their suburban design, and

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[1] Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', p. 404. Cedric Firth in State Housing in New Zealand, Ministry of Works, Wellington, 1949, p.67d.quotes a higher figure of 33,766 state rental houses, although he does not specify if these were completed and tenanted. Some may have been temporary workers' family dwellings at such as those at hydro-electricity construction villages. Multi-unit dwellings accounted for only 367 dwellings at this time.

[2] Trlin, A. D., 'State Housing', in Some may have b Social Welfare and New Zealand Society, Methuen Publications, 1977, p.112.

[3]een temporary workers' fami106, citing AJHR,1937, B 13A, p. 26.

examines how the realised outcome unveils ideas about how it was envisaged that a family would live in their house. Finally this chapter examines implications that the houses' designs may have had on the allocation of tenancy.

Background

The Labour Party's 1935 election manifesto, written by Walter Nash, contained utopian ideals in a message designed to appeal to an economically depressed electorate's aspirations for a better future.

> The Policy is idealistic. It visions New Zealand as the country where the plenty of the machine age shall assure to all the rich life in goods and leisure that the genius and natural resources of our country make possible. The Policy is practicable, for the committee had profound knowledge of social trends and of New Zealand conditions. To build the ideal Social State with the available material is the purpose of the Labour Party.[4]

The vision depicted New Zealand as a land of plenty which through imaginative management could deliver its abundance to all. The Labour Party formed in 1916 was composed of members, often self-educated in Fabian literature, who promoted socialist methods of wealth re-distribution and social welfare as a means of addressing social problems. In particular, those concerning poverty were often seen in conjunction with poor housing. The utopian idealism reflects claims that New Zealand was 'God's own Country' with a natural abundance which was available for all to convert to their own use through hard work.[5] Soon to become the Minister of Finance, Nash's ideas expressed the state's social responsibility to 'assure to all' their share of the 'rich life'. The 'first charge' on the

[4] "Labour has a Plan', Speeches and Documents, p.318.
[5] Miles Fairburn explores this idea in The Ideal Society and its Enemies,

community was to care for the worker, the old the young and the sick.[6] The policy reflected Labour's commitment to 'applied Christianity' or Christian Socialism that Nash, and other members of the Party, considered to be synonymous.

Prior to the 1935 election, successive conservative governments had given attention to housing, but predominantly in the form of affordable loans for workers. The state had, in the years following the Great War and up to the Depression, lent money to home owners through the 1906 Advances to Workers Act. From 1923, an amendment made it possible for the state to lend up to 95% of the property's value to an aspiring home owner.[7] Home ownership was seen as a way to satisfy both housing needs and other social concerns. Government policies attempted to contain industrial unrest and neutralise the threat of communism by committing workers to their jobs through their mortgage commitments to a house and a piece of land. This was typically expressed as:

> a man who has a stake in the country will usually take a sane view of things, and will not be in the same danger of running to extremes as he would be if he had no interest in the home in which he lived.[8]

By 1926 about 50% of salary and wage earners owned their own homes. This was possibly among the highest rates of home ownership in the world at that time.[9] The Californian bungalow style dominated new low cost suburban housing. Built from builders' own pattern books, it was

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[6] Sinclair, K., Walter Nash, Auckland Universty Press, Oxford University Press, paperback edition,1977, p.91.

[7] Fairburn, M., 'The Farmers Take Over', inly dwellings at The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand Auckland, Oxford University Press, Second Ed. 1996, p. 206.

[8] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.85, quoting D W Smith in New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, vol 185, 1919, pp 272-3.

[9] Fairburn, 'The Farmers Take Over', p.206.

frequently subjected to the criticism of being of poor quality. Architects were not generally involved in these designs, preferring instead to utilise the 'arts and crafts' style associated with Britain.[10] The rapid rise in home ownership during these years did not address the housing needs of the very poor, in overcrowded inner-city conditions, who were unable to afford the required 5% deposit. Some low-income households and builders were caught in a price speculation spiral which could not be sustained when the full effects of the Depression were felt.

The Coalition Government's response to the Depression had been to cut government spending in order to balance its budget. This had the effect of increasing unemployment and further stifling the economy. Public interest in economic and political issues increased and theories were widely discussed. In 1935 Labour was not seen as responsible for the economic state of the country, its policies were attractive and seemed to offer popular solutions. Labour's economic policy caught the electorate's imagination and in Keith Sinclair's words, 'it could hum the popular tunes', with its ideas and vision for a better future.[11] Both political parties felt that home ownership was to be encouraged. Labour's vision of state involvement in housing was promoted as a means of both stimulating the economy and addressing the problem of poor housing. A public housing programme, envisaged as a component of social welfare reform and economic management, was prioritised.

A steadily worsening housing problem, exacerbated by the Depression, was particularly evident in inner-city areas. In central Wellington,

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[10]Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.90

[11] Sinclair, K., A History of New Zealand, Penguin Books, New Zealand, First Published 1959, Revised Edition, 1988, p. 265.

according to the Truth in 1934, 7,000 families lived in 'rotten, decrepit stinking, disease-pregnant, damp and vermin infested houses'.[12] The Auckland City Engineer's Survey described 35% of that city's inner-city housing as totally unsatisfactory.[13] A comprehensive housing survey, proposed by the outgoing Coalition Government, was carried out by Labour after the election. The results of this survey were not specifically acted on and may well have served the purpose of making official what was plainly apparent.[14] Housing was inadequate in quantity and quality. Maori housing had even poorer conditions with overcrowding and substandard water and sanitation services. It was estimated that New Zealand had a shortage of 20,000 housing units.[15] The size of the housing shortage meant the prospect of good affordable housing through a public housing scheme could not be immediately delivered to the electors.

Demand for housing had been dampened by the Depression as young couples postponed marriage and establishing families until better economic times. R Metge commented that the 'building and construction industry was an economic barometer – and one particularly sensitive to cyclical fluctuations in business conditions.' [16] The building trades and labourers represented a large proportion of the unemployed. In 1932, 30% of unemployed men were labourers and a further 16% were tradesmen.[17] It was hoped that by building up to 5,000 houses a year, this would have a on effect and stimulate other areas of the economy.

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[12] Olssen, E., 'Towards a New Society', p.276.
[13] Ibid, p.277.
[14] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.120.
[15] Shaw, New Zealand Architecture, p.133.
[16] Metge, R., 'The House that Jack Built', Unpublished thesis, University of Auckland, 1972, p.6.
[17] Ibid, p.6,

As the electoral voice of the trade unions and unemployed, the Labour Party leadership felt their support was secure, so aimed the election campaign at those whose vote could not be counted on: farmers, white collar workers, shopkeepers and especially those people particularly affected by the vagaries of international prices. Canadian Douglas Social Credit seemed a possible solution, especially to farmers and small business owners. Walter Nash and others in the Labour Party, agreed that it was essential for the state to be involved in the economy. While rejecting Social Credit theories, the party arrived at a position that appeased that faction. Labour promised sweeping changes in the manner in which the state could, and would, be involved in subsidising incomes, controlling interest rates and credit reform.[18] These ideas represented not a rejection of capitalism, but rather an attempt 'to turn capitalism quite painlessly into a nicer form of capitalism which will eventually become indistinguishable from socialism', and appealed to those who believed that New Zealand had the labour and the materials to rebuild the economy in a fairer and more equitable manner.[19] The election swung in Labour's favour, largely as a result of the support of the poorer country electorates. Its comfortable majority assured the new Labour Government that its social welfare election promises were supported.

Shortly after the 1936 election Labour came to an arrangement with the Ratana Church. As a result three Ratana Members for Parliament entered into an arrangement to support the Labour Government. During this period Maori were living predominantly in rural areas, often in very poor

[18] J.A. Lee later wrote that Labour's credit reform platform was what had attracted the Douglas Social Credit Movement, many of whom, prior to this, considered Labour too vulgar' because of its association with working-class interests. Sinclain, Walter Nash, p.166.

[19] Sinclair quotes from Tomorrow, a socialist labour periodical in A History of New Zealand, p.267.

conditions. Apirana Ngata, the Native Affairs Minister under the Coates' Coalition Government, had believed that Maori people would be best able to prosper by developing their own lands through improved agricultural practices. He devoted his energies to achieving this. The focus of the Labour Government's involvement in Maori housing was to be on improving rural housing through the Department of Native Affairs, later to become the Department of Maori Affairs. Michael Savage, as the Labour Prime Minister, became the Minister of Native Affairs after his election. Proposed state housing schemes did not specifically exclude Maori, but Labour's vision did not include them either, as it was assumed that Maori would continue to live in rural areas.[20]

The two aspects of policy most often associated with this Labour's government were the realisation of comprehensive social welfare policies and a state house building programme. In broad terms housing was a component of Labour's social welfare policy. However, Gael Ferguson has demonstrated that the access of very poor households to the suburban dream home relied on the idea that government housing assistance, directed to the 'respectable' skilled and semi-skilled, would 'filter down' to include the poor.[21] Theoretically social welfare measures were to be assured to all, although in practice, and particularly with regard to housing, this was to be compromised by both value judgements and financial considerations. Labour's plan to build the 'ideal social state' with bricks and mortar was commenced early in 1936 when a range of often conflicting ideas were put into action.

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[20] Butterworth, G. V., and Young, H R, Maori Affairs: Nga Take Maori, Government Printer, Wellington, 1990, p.80.

[21] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.13, 59.

Implementation

The challenges that lay ahead of the new government were daunting. The most difficult of these was that there was no existing government department with the capacity to take on the proposed building programme. While discussions for the implementation of the programme were taking place, legislation had to be enacted in order to fund the programme. The government bought out the private shareholders of the Reserve Bank in order to gain greater control over credit. The legislation stipulated that the bank's role was now to promote the 'economic and social welfare of New Zealand'.[22] The building programme's legislative basis was a reactivated 1919 Housing Act. Additional provisions were incorporated into the 1936 State Advances Corporation Act. By these means the state was able to control the flow of money it would invest in the building industry and control interest rates. The State Advances Corporation borrowed 5 million pounds from the Reserve Bank at 1% interest for the first draw-down and 1.5% for subsequent borrowings.[23] With the financial and administrative considerations taken care of, the government could then direct its attention to the houses' construction. The Department of Housing Construction was created as a branch of the State Advances Corporation. Under the control of Arthur Tyndall, with Nash's close involvement and John A. Lee's enthusiasm, plans for the housing scheme began in earnest.

Lee, as Under Secretary to Nash, managed the promotion and public relations aspect of state housing in such a manner to as be publicly

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[22] Ibid, p.123.
[23] Firth, State Housing, p.7.

associated with its success far beyond his actual input.[24] In his departmental report, 'Rough Notes on Housing', Lee outlined his initial ideas for state housing. The Swedish model of public housing was recommended because of Sweden's similar geography, resources and climate. This model contained high quality, separate, small houses in a suburban setting. Vienna's model of housing was rejected on the grounds that it was 'completely socialist' in that tenants' rentals were heavily subsidised.[25] Lee was not alone in favouring the suburban setting. He resisted the idea of inner-city housing, possibly because of its associations with the tenements of Britain, and endorsed the suburb as the desirable location for the family. [26] Lee's vision of state rental housing was inclusive: he wanted the houses to cater for all, regardless of incomes and age. He concluded that the Labour Government's programme could provide high quality homes at low rentals, although this vision was compromised because the cost of houses was higher than anticipated.

Lee was aware that building new state houses would cost more than the Depression values of existing houses and that the release of large sums of money into the economy, through wages, could stimulate the economy beyond the building industry. Although this was the desired outcome, Treasury was concerned that a balance be struck between the rental cost of state houses and the cost of public and private sector houses. Treasury considered that if rents were set too low this would discourage home-

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[24] Although Metge's thesis title, 'The House that Jack Built', implies that Jack Lee's activities were a significant factor in state housing, Metge downplays Lee's role, and notes that his interest in it was brief.

[25] Later inner-city multi-unit buildings, the Berhampore Block in Wellington and the Greys Avenue Block in Auckland were not intended as family housing.

[26] Lee, J., 'Rough Notes on Housing '1936, p.15, 'Housing General', 3/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives.

ownership.[27] Although Labour was committed to resolving the housing problem by providing publicly owned housing, it did not want to stifle home ownership.

The management of the building programme was to prove a difficult problem. James Fletcher, the head of a large building company, had previously approached Labour in opposition, offering his company's services to manage the programme. Initially the Labour government did not want to ally itself with a private industry and investigated other options. The Railways Department, which had built houses for its employees since 1880, was investigated for re-activation. However, its plant had been closed and the machinery sold. The other option, the Public Works Department was, according to Savage, incapable of building a fowl-house.[28] Early in 1936, Fletcher was approached about the prospect of selling his business to the state. Fletcher declined to sell. He was then asked to arrange plans for pilot schemes in Auckland and Wellington. Auckland architects were approached for these plans.[29] The houses at Miramar were built by private contractors. An unsuccessful attempt was made to build more with an under-capitalised trade union co-operative. These houses were completed by Fletcher's Construction Company which appeared to be the only company substantial enough to cope with the large scale of the work. Fletcher's alliance with the Housing Division was a successful means of utilising an existing structure to manage the public building of state houses. Although smaller private building firms felt that they had been denied access to the programme and its profits, Fletcher later maintained that building state houses had not been profitable for his

[27] Metge, 'The House that Jack Built', p. 44.
[28] Ibid, p.18.
[29] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.125.

company either. The trade unions were concerned that the Labour Government had 'sold out' its socialist aspirations to the interests of capital, but the relationship between Fletcher's company and the state was a pragmatic solution. It proved to be the most efficient means and best structure available to build state houses.[30]

However, the realisation of the designs was not happening quickly enough to satisfy Fletcher in mid-1936. He wanted to start building in order to take advantage of the depressed prices of land, materials and labour.[31] A further 400 sets of plans were drawn up by members of the New Zealand Institute of Architects to be used for houses other than those at Orakei. Although the houses were both simple and compact in design, a high standard of construction, utilising the best available materials, was required. For insurance and depreciation purposes the houses were given a life-span of 60 years, at a time when an average wooden house was estimated to have a life-span of 30 years.[32] A significant factor in the high cost of the houses was the quality of the material and the labour-intensive construction methods, especially in the earlier houses. For instance, most of the houses had a concrete tile roof. These not only used more timber to support their weight than corrugated iron, but required more labour in their manufacture and installation. Although cheaper, iron roofing material sourced from overseas, did not comply with the policy to use New Zealand labour and materials wherever possible. The toilet was separate from the bathroom, even though this added another 30 pounds per unit. Copper piping was used rather than galvanised iron; the extra cost was justified 'seeing that we

[30] Metge, 'The House that Jack Built,' p.18.
[31] Ibid, p.24.
[32] Ibid, p.30.

are building for the Nation.' [33] The shortage of skilled labour also contributed to push up the cost of houses. This was offset by the use of unskilled labour in the digging and pouring of solid concrete foundations where practicable. The expense was justified on the grounds that the scheme was not simply to provide worker housing, but was also an aspect of a wider plan of social investment in community welfare.

Although the Labour Government had been elected in late 1935, only 22 state houses had been built by the end of March 1937, reflecting the complexities in the programme's implementation. These new houses were shop windows of the new building programme and the Labour Government's commitment to social welfare. Lee stage-managed widespread publicity when the Prime Minister and Lee carried the furniture in for the first tenants. Because the houses had cost more than initially anticipated, the rents were higher than most had expected. Metge claims that Treasury's concerns that low rentals would stifle private home building contributed to a level of rent higher than generally expected. The high rentals acted to strengthen the real estate market. This indicated that state house rentals did not compete with home-ownership: provided rent costs compared favourably with the cost of a mortgage, it was 'economically advantageous and personally more satisfying to own one's own home'.[34] Tenants were drawn from higher-paid trades and white-collar workers. Yet applicants far outstripped the supply of houses. In 1937, 2,000 applicants were received in one month alone for Wellington's new houses.[35] By March 1939, 5,390 houses were built or under construction.

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[33] Lee, J A. 'Progress in Housing', March 1937, 'Housing General', 3/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives.

[34] Metge, 'The House that Jack Built', pp 44-45.

[35] Ibid, p.45.

Apart from 1943 when materials were diverted for the war effort, an average of 3,000 were built a year until 1949.[36]

The lack of readily available land had been an ongoing difficulty for the Department of Housing Construction. The suburban ideal was difficult to implement in some of New Zealand's hilly towns and cities. Suitable land was not available in situations sufficiently close to transport services. The cost of developing and connecting an infrastructure of services was prohibitive. In 1943 the Department of Housing Construction became a branch of the Ministry of Works. With this alliance the department was able to utilise heavy earth-moving machinery to make land available for housing which would have otherwise been not viable or inaccessible. New satellite towns and suburbs were now able to be developed for residential housing in positions that would have proved beyond the financial means of private developers. In summing up the programme, Metge described Labour's housing activities as a 'process bringing together New Zealand materials, labour and finance to provide jobs and help build a nation called New Zealand.'[37]

State House Design

What of the designs themselves? There seems to be a consensus of opinion that the designs and suburban location of the houses implied fixed ideas about how those responsible for the designs viewed quality appropriate worker housing. The implications of these ideas on the houses designs will be examined. Little evidence appears to exist in the way of instructions to

[36] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.130.
[37] Metge, 'The House that jack Built', p.60.

the architects, beyond the numbers of rooms required, as to the type of house the Housing Division would find most acceptable. The acceptance of the architects' blueprints indicates that mutually acceptable shapes for good, solid, public housing had been found. With five million pounds of public money set aside for building the houses, the planners would have to have been confident that the houses' design would reassure the public that their money was well spent.

The designs were conservative, which was ironical as architects had been asked to express their individuality in the designs.[38] Any individuality that was expressed was seen in the style of the house. In 1939 some of the more fanciful designs were culled to achieve some standardisation and facilitate efficiency. Further standardisation followed when quantity surveyors produced a master schedule of houses.[39] The government was dependant on electoral success in order to continue the building programme beyond the next election, and 'it was politically expedient to respond to conservative taste ...it was alright to experiment ... as long as the standard looked like a "house" and not like a "cow shed".[40] The numbers of unsatisfied applicants for state houses, indicates not only the extent of the housing shortage, but also suggests that their designs were well received by the public, regardless of their high rentals. Timaru's newspaper wrote of its town's first state houses, 'the new houses are the embodiment, in every particular, of beauty and efficiency'.[41] It appeared that in selecting conservative plans the Labour Government and the administrators of the housing programme had

[38] Shaw, New Zealand Architecture, p.132.
[39] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.137.
[40] Shaw, New Zealand Architecture, p.134, quoting from Wendy Fitzpatrick's unpublished thesis.'Government Sponsored Housing in New Zealand'.
[41] The Post, 29 January, 1938, cited by Ferguson, The New Zealand Dream, p.134

succeeded in satisfying the tastes of a broad section of the community. The politicians and the Housing Division planners were humming a very 'popular tune'.

Ideas

Before the first state house was built ideas had evolved that would determine its appearance and its setting. Ideas such as the 'close connection between happiness, health, and housing needs little proof' were claimed as gospel.[42] These ideas reflected social and political faith in 'the utopian belief that art should be used to provide well-designed environments in which people could function closer to their full potential.'[43] State houses and their locations were designed as 'machines' for workers and their families.[44] However the housing crisis shifted the focus from worker housing to the need to house families. This shift increased in the post-war period with the return of servicemen to civilian life. The ideas that contributed to state housing's physical appearance were the result of ideologies which supported the idea of the nuclear family. Organic planning, environmental determinism and the nuclear family have been proposed by Ben Schrader as themes which contributed to state housing's planning and appearance. Gael Ferguson has identified the state's commitment to social welfare as a separate contributing factor. Schrader

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[42] Firth, State Housing, p.1

[43] De La Croix, H., et al. Gardner's Art Through the Ages, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Florida, 1987, pp 998-999.

[44] 'Modern houses', according to Le Corbusier, an important European architect of this period, are 'machines for living in' Ibid, p.1002. The influence of Corbusier and his 'modernist' style is externally apparent on inner city blocks of multi storey flats, such as Berhampore and Greys Avenue flats, where Gordon Wilson, Ernst Plischke and Cedric Firth, all of whom worked as architects for the Department of Housing Construction, attempted to utilise this style.

has incorporated social welfare influences into the themes. The following discussion is based on Schrader's thesis but also draws from Ferguson and other sources.[45]

Organic planning draws on ideas formulated in the Romantic movement in the world of arts and literature of nineteenth-century Britain. Romantics believed that natural environments were superior to those that were created artificially, and conversely 'spawned the idea of recreating the world but of doing it by scientific means'.[46] These ideas were taken up in the late-nineteenth century by social reformers who promoted organically planned garden suburbs which expressed the idea that design and planning could improve environments by the introduction of elements of nature. Ranked dichotomous values included; the country was better than the city; fresh country air was better than miasmic city air; and winding country roads were better than straight city streets. Integrated into these ideas were those thought to affect people's moral values. The evils of the dirty city were in this sense the causes of social corruption, such as drunkenness, vagrancy, prostitution, poverty and disease. In opposition to these, the virtues of thrift, hard work and sober living were thought to exist in the rural setting where people were uncontaminated by the city. In the nineteenth century, there was an exodus of middle-class people from the city, away from their place of work to the country, or to the outer limits of the city serviced by the new public transport systems, in the belief that their families would be healthier and happier there.[47]

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[45] Schrader, 'Planning Happy Families', p.12.

[46] Olssen, E., 'Mr Wakefield and New Zealand as an Experiment in Post Enlightenment Experimental Practice' The New Zealand Journal of History, October 1997,Volume 31, Number 2., p.203.

[47] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p. 26.

The paradox remained unresolved, however, that those who had moved to the country still gained their livelihood from the city; their incomes were derived from the often sweated labour of city dwellers and was, therefore, tainted. Real and imagined fears of civil and industrial unrest prompted social reformers to consider that country life might act as a beneficial means of circumventing industrial unrest by providing an environment where the worker could be reformed by the clean country air for the better. In Britain, the model village of Port Sunlight was created by William Lever, a wealthy soap manufacturer and Liberal Member of Parliament. George Cadbury, of chocolate fame, built a similar model town at Bournville, near where Walter Nash had lived for twelve years.[48] This style came to be known as a 'garden city' style. Although the terms 'garden' and 'city' are as at odds with each other as 'organic' and 'planning', their realisation at both Port Sunlight and Bournville has expressed the idea that a pleasant living environment could be planned to incorporate both industry and elements of the country. Liberal social reformers hoped that a wider acceptance of planned garden cities could neutralise social unrest and that industrialists could ease their consciences knowing that their incomes were not tainted with sweated labour. In 1898, Ebenezer Howard set these ideas out in Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform.[49] The theme of his work was the search for a means by which both workers and capitalists could have their needs met. The capitalist needed a ready work-force, anxious to keep their jobs; the workers needed sufficient income to maintain their families and ideally enough surplus income to sustain hope for a better future and the accumulation of some assets. The garden city ideas did not challenge the existing social order. Rather such ideas sought sought to neutralise the potential for workers' unrest by elevating them to

[48] Sinclair, Walter Nash, p. 8-10.
[49] This work was republished in 1902 as Garden Cities of Tomorrow

the middle class by social improvement: by housing workers in the country or suburbs that simulated aspects of the country.[50]

Although immigrants from Britain had been attracted to New Zealand with Arcadian visions of a land of 'milk and honey', for these visions were not realised. Reports of sweated labour in the late 1880s, the depression of 1878-95 and maritime strike of 1890 brought with them the fear of industrial unrest, associated with poor housing and their perceived associated evils, to this country. These fears were possibly played on by the popular press and others as a means of achieving social changes. The idea of poor housing and its associations with poverty, filth, infectious diseases and social unrest was used as the opposite to good housing and a happy healthy satisfied work force. 'Slums', as a concept, were used to highlight the possible threat these conditions posed to the middle classes.[51] These ideas were taken up by influential New Zealanders, especially liberal and reform politicians. The idea that the respectable worker would be corrupted through contact with the unrespectable poor prompted an early attempt by Richard Seddon in 1905 to promote and build quality rental suburban houses for respectable workers. This housing programme had largely failed, in part, because of its suburban location. This location, chosen by the planners, reflected their ideas of desirable worker housing, but failed to recognise that workers did not necessarily share this view. Workers often wanted to be close to their workplace, but a suburban home added the cost of travel to high rental outlay.[52]

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[50] Schrader, 'Planning Happy Families' p.21.

[51] Mayne, A., The Imagined Slum : newspaper representation in three cities, 1970-1914, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1993, 228p.

[52] Fill, B., Seddons State Houses, Historic Places Trust, 1984, p.8.

Other attempts at suburb creation were more successful. Samuel Hurst Seager, described by Schrader as the founder of modern town planning, was conversant with Howard's ideas.[53] Seager expressed his ideas on a small, steep property at Sumner, Christchurch. Here he built eight bungalows, in 'a singularly antipodean version of the English garden city movement'.[54] These houses, and others designed by British-trained architects between 1910 and 1930, drew their inspiration from the 'arts and crafts' movement which, in turn, drew on romantic and idealised, rustic country cottages and houses.[55] Features of this style included dominant slate or tile roofs, plaster or brick walls, mullioned sash windows and features such as faux Elizabethan half timbering. Their new owners were drawn from the professions, not the working class. In response to concerns about public health and poor housing, Seager organised a Town-Planning Conference in 1919, sponsored by the Department of Internal Affairs. The conference reported to G. W. Russell, who held both the Internal Affairs and Public Health portfolios. He recommended the government develop a garden suburb. The Orakei Garden Suburb, planned by R. B. Hammond, who was later to become the director of the Housing Division, was the eventual outcome of these recommendations.[56] The street layouts of Orakei, and of most state housing areas, reflect the ideals of the garden suburb through the organic ideas expressed in the integration of housing with natural formations of the land. The layouts incorporate houses positioned to capture the maximum sunlight and fresh air among curved streets and reserved green areas. Many public servants who subscribed to the ideas of the movement were later to have considerable influence over

[53] Schrader, 'Planning Happy Families', p.44.
[54] Shaw, New Zealand Architecture, p.85.
[55] The Auckland University School of Architecture was established in 1918. even after its establishment many aspiring architects still preferred to travel to Europe to learn their craft. Ibid, p.102.
[56] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.74-79.

the housing and urban development policies which focussed on the protection of the single-family home in the suburbs.

Organic planning enthusiasts promoted the country as the ideal location for workers, or failing that, an environment which had elements of the country incorporated into it. Ferguson has described the suburb as the 'meeting point between the imagery of the rural dream and a very pragmatic approach to urban life.'[57] New state houses appeared in pockets in existing suburbs and in large developments in the post-war years of several hundred houses in new suburbs on city and town perimeters. The quarter acre section adopted for family units provided space around the houses for light and ventilation, allowed space for children to play and for men to grow vegetables to supplement their wages. The locations of these suburbs were sufficiently close to cities to allow for access, but were sufficiently distant to create a time and spatial barrier between work and home. Organic planning ideas also influenced state houses' appearance. The conservatively shaped detached or semi-detached house with its high windows and steeply pitched roof, nodded to a past English cottage shape. This country cottage shape also reflected ideas about how politicians, designers and planners imagined the tenants. The respectable country cottage was a house for the respectable, 'poor-but-honest' worker and his family.

The suburbs were planned to have a distinctive appearance, beginning with the street. The grid street layout was avoided as much as possible. The favoured layout instead was one of curves and with recessed courts and culs-de sac arrangements to minimise through traffic in the residential areas. Wide grass verges were planned to make the areas safe for children.

[57] Ibid, p.88.

Cedric Firth in State Housing in New Zealand outlines some of the reasoning behind the street-scape:

> A serious obstacle to the creation of a successful New Zealand street scene has been the front fence of palings, or even post and wire, or the front hedge. In Housing Division developments, however, front gardens are treated on broad lines by eliminating front and dividing fences. The front garden, although an expression of individual ideas, is not viewed from the cottage aspect alone, but as part of a large community whole. While there is obviously some loss of privacy under this system, ... it does tend to give a more unified street picture.[58]

Firth dismissed the lack of privacy as being of small consequence and of less importance than the 'large community whole'.

Individual architects and city planners within the Housing Division, such as Firth, Gordon Wilson and Ernest Plischke, attempted to create planned communities rather than tracts of connected but independent houses. Schrader's thesis examined ideas of planned communities through a case study of the proposed community centre at Naenae, a state housing suburb in the Hutt Valley. He examines how, and why, the community centre did not eventuate. Schrader concluded that, of the many factors responsible for the decision, financial considerations were one. Naenae was not a wealthy area. Residents were unlikely to vote for a measure that would increase their council rates. Another reason was that families were too busy raising young families to be involved in community activities. The main factor Schrader identified as responsible for the lack of support for the proposal was that Naenae was a collection of individual homes designed to raise families in on an individual basis. The idea of an individual private family home was not compatible with the ideals of a planned community.

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[58] Firth, State Housing, p.13.

Schrader concluded that Naenae did have a community, and community activities, but these were informal and spontaneous, rather than planned.

During the Labour Government's time in office, areas of state housing development demonstrated attempts at planned communities. However, the pressure to build houses took financial precedence over these plans. By the end of the 1940s the planning was restricted to the separation of industrial, commercial and residential areas.

Environmental determinism conveys the idea that the environment could have positive and negative effects, and influence an individual's physical and moral welfare. These ideas infiltrated housing policy because of concerns held about the quality and quantity of the population. In New Zealand fears that the population was declining to the point where it was not replacing itself were grounded in evidence that women were having fewer children. The average Pakeha family size had dropped from six in the mid-nineteenth century to less than three children in the 1920s. This was especially apparent among middle-class women who were controlling their fertility, in spite of exhortations from the state, church and members of the medical profession.[59] Offsetting this trend, however, was a corresponding decline in Pakeha infant mortality rates.[60] Although children's chances of survival were better than previously, fears that the population was in a physically unhealthy state were underscored by the high rate of rejected recruits from the Great War.[61] Other real or imagined

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[59] Mayne, The Imagined Slum.

[60] Philippa Mein Smith points out that the figures given excluded Maori, and in Australia, Aborigines, in the interests of gauging the strength of the white races only. Mothers and King Baby: Infant Suvival and Welfare in an Imperial World 1880-1950, Macmillan, London, 1997, pp10-12.

[61] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, pp77-78.

concerns focussed on the idea that 'the unfit' were reproducing profusely.[62] In the early part of this century suburban housing became a means of addressing these fears. For the 'fit', good housing would provide a private and healthy environment for women to procreate for the good of the Empire. For those who had been deemed as 'unfit', a healthy home, when combined with education, act to create healthy children.

Frederick Truby King, through the Royal New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children, became New Zealand's state-assisted, champion of pro-natalism. The Plunket Society, as it became known, offered services that were not directly linked to housing. However the Society's commitment to child-care practices does offer a parallel insight to the importance of pro-natalist issues and the influence of environmental determinist thinking. Erik Olssen has written that Truby King's prescriptions were contained within a Protestant work ethic paradigm. The focus of this was the promotion of the virtues of regularity, discipline and control in both the babies and their mothers in the belief that babies raised in this way would demonstrate these virtues as adults.[63] Plunket's self appointed role was expressed in its motto 'to help the mothers and save the babies', by teaching the mothers scientific methods of child-care. The aim was, given women's fertility rate was dropping, to make each child physically and morally healthy.[64] Prescriptions for good mothering encompassed value-laden ideas of discipline and control that extended to both the mother and the child. However Plunket's well-publicised methods were not only difficult for the mother and child to follow but of doubtful

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[62] Mein Smith, Mothers and King Baby, p.32.

[63] Olssen, E., 'Truby King and the Plunket Society: an Analysis of a Prescriptive Ideology', in New Zealand Journal Of History, Volume 15, No. 1, 1981.

[64] Mein Smith, Mothers and King Baby, pp1-7.

value. Infant mortality rates had dropped dramatically during the course of this century, with or without child-care schedules. Eventually virtually all Pakeha mothers of new babies came under the Plunket Society's care, although not all followed its prescriptions. When Lee wrote in 1936, 'whatever one may say of the parents, it would be generally agreed that children were as much entitled, as children to decent housing as to decent education,' he was alluding not only to parents' inadequacies, but also to the idea that children could be 'saved' from repeating their parents' mistakes through the effects of a good environment and education.[65] His opinion indicates that he considered children's welfare and its adjunct, pro-natalism, to be popular platforms from which to appeal for support for the state's housing activities.

The idea of new state housing generated widespread interest. The houses were state- owned and, therefore, public property. This appeared to prompt one member of the public to consider that state tenants should be monitored to ensure that the public's investment in housing was having the desired outcome. The Director of Housing Construction received a letter in 1936 from a concerned citizen who wrote:

> It has occurred to me ... that it might be possible for your department to have a capable, tactful women inspector of mature years whose duty it would be to make a monthly inspection (where necessary). ...[H]er duty would be to advise and help those somewhat helpless housewives to mend their ways and adopt cleanly habits.[66]

The letter was referred to the State Advances Corporation. It is not known if the suggestion was taken seriously. However the vision of a mature woman inspector did realise itself in the form of Plunket nurses who

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[65] Lee, J., 'Rough Notes on Housing',1936, p.6, 'Housing General', 3/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives.

[66] 'Housing General', 13/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives.

visited homes where there was a new baby. Ostensibly there to weigh and measure the baby, the nurses also cast a supervisory eye over other householders.

Sophie Watson has pointed out that young married couples have, this century, been given higher priority for state housing assistance, as part of various western government's concerns about falling fertility rates, than other family types.[67] Fertility rates for New Zealand women, which had steadily fallen, reached a record low in 1935 of 2.2 live births per woman. Privacy, space and fresh air were considered to be the important factors which encouraged women to reproduce. These factors had contributed to previous governments' promotion of individual houses in suburban locations as ideal for young families. The Labour Government's choice of the same environment for state housing reflected its belief that it could 'engineer a social environment which would promote marriage, procreation and family life', in an attempt to raise the Pakeha birthrate and improve the subsequent health of those children.[68]

Environmental deterministic ideas, as expressed in housing, were the result of changes in thinking. Individuals were less likely to be seen as responsible for their condition. The ugly manifestations of poverty, disease and malnutrition were the results of environmental factors which could be addressed through improved housing and education. The theoretical proposition was prescriptive, in the sense that if the correct mix of elements could be given to people, these would act to alleviate some of the social problems seen as besetting New Zealand society. Architects,

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[67] Watson, S., Accommodating Inequality: Gender and Housing, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988.

[68] Schrader, 'Planning Happy Families', p.65.

politicians and social reformers believed that the environment contributed to an individual's well-being and sought to elevate working-class environments to resemble those of the middle class. Both political parties were essentially interested in improving social conditions. The difference lay in how each party believed this was to be achieved. The conservative Coalition Government's rationale had been that home ownership fostered positive characteristics in society. It 'was the moral virtues associated with ownership, particularly thrift, which were to make the good citizen, not good housing as such'.[69] The Labour Government's position differed. Quality housing in a healthy and pleasant setting would provide the environment which would foster the development of good citizenship.

The idea of environmental determinism was based on the assumption that an individual could be changed for the better through education and their environment. The socially approved model of change was shaped by social and cultural values. Similarly, architectural cultural values were transposed to state housing to shape its form. William Toomath has shown that New Zealand housing has had a strong tradition of drawing its inspiration from the United States as evidenced in this country's preference for wooden frame housing, notably the Bay Villa of the late-nineteenth century and the Californian bungalow of the 1920s and 1930s.[70] Toomath has proposed that there have been two streams of culture operating in New Zealand: the popular culture that is shared among the community and tend towards American fashions and ways, and second, 'cultivated' tastes. These 'cultivated' tastes tend to be characteristic of leaders of the community and lean towards British airs and traditions. The North American style houses

[69] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.91.
[70] Toomath, W., Built in New Zealand: The Houses We Live In, HarperCollins, New Zealand, 1996.

were suitable for the climate, practical and economical. However the Californian bungalow, in particular, was seen as 'common' because it was not architecturally designed in the British arts and crafts tradition, but mass produced from pattern books. Toomath has proposed that the New Zealand state house carries references to the arts and crafts movement because it was this style that carries the 'cultivated' tastes in a form approved of by architects, community leaders and politicians. He proposed that this style of housing was chosen because it was hoped that the higher cultural associations would influence the tenants in socially approved ways.[71]

Not all architects agreed that the cottage shape was the ideal design to nurture the family in. Vernon Brown, an architect working in Auckland, criticised the English cottage tradition of state houses during this period. He said that the cottages were like over-sweet cake, and that they damaged the organism they purported to nourish. Brown's building style was to attempt to build houses that were like wholemeal bread.[72] Both Brown and the architects involved with the design of state houses were agreed, however, that the design of a house would influence the lives of their tenants.

The **nuclear family** as the 'normal' family type is identified by Schrader as a third theme that influenced state housing's appearance. The idea of the suburb and the nuclear family are entwined. Both have gathered an ideology about them that has operated to connect the two ideas. Walter Nash said:

> I am a socialist in the sense that I believe that a major responsibility of government is to provide collectively for the economic welfare and security of the individual. But I am

[71] Ibid, p.177.
[72] Shaw, New Zealand Architecture, pp 144-145.

> conservative in the sense that I look upon the family as the foundation of the nation.[73]

The individual nuclear family was promoted and guarded by the socialist and conservative governments as a means of realising a range of conservative agendas thought to be essential for stabilising the economy and society. Nash's conservative outlook reflected his belief that the family could be safeguarded through state investment in good rental housing for those unable to purchase houses. By providing rental houses for families, industrial unrest could be contained and pro-natalist policies be encouraged. These two ideas are linked to gender and the assumption that home was the place for women, while paid work was the role for men. A gendered spatial association of ideas linked city, work and men as the producers of money to the public sphere, and the suburb as the place for women in the private sphere of the home. This gender segregation was a complex process which had begun in the previous century, coinciding with a growing middle-class geographical shift from the city to those rail-linked outlying suburban areas. This geographical shift became associated with an ideology that supported the family home in the suburb and an increased emphasis on the importance of the married woman's role in the home.

The idea of the gender segregation of public and private spheres gained widespread currency and a supporting ideology during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The status of housework was elevated to a science as women became personally responsible for the health and well-being of their families. The middle-class households, which could be supported on a single male income, fostered the conditions

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[73] Sinclair, Walter Nash, p.112.

that fed the growth of the image of the ideal nuclear family.[74] Middle-class temperance advocates and moral reformers of the late-nineteenth century, who had expressed the idea of the city as the source of evil licentious ways, saw the family home as the antidote for this. Inner-city evidence of drunkenness, fighting, gambling and immorality were seen as male vices, in opposition to the beneficial female redemptive virtues associated with the home. Respectable paid work for women became confined to a narrow range of feminised occupations, often in spaces separated from the public, and closely related to the gender segregated work of maintaining the private home. Women were expected to relinquish this paid work on marriage.

Spatially defined gendered areas were also found within the suburban house. The parts of the house available and visible to the public carried masculine associations. Rooms where women worked servicing the family were secreted at the back of the house and, therefore, private.[75] Although women were responsible for the good health, cleanliness and moral well-being of their families, the work was performed out of sight of the public. As the role of women as housekeepers increased, so their work was idealised to appear effortless, invisible and part of a woman's natural role.

Supporting the idea that 'a woman's place was in the home' was the 'family wage' paid to male wage earners. Labour's Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Amendment Act in 1936, operated to support women's exclusion from adequately paid work. It specified a social component in wage setting that stipulated that the adult male wage was to be based on

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[74] Novitz, R., 'Bridging the Gap', in S. Cox, ed. Public & Private Worlds, Women in Contemporary New Zealand, Allen and Unwin, Port Nicholson Press, 1987, p.27.

[75] Spain D., Gendered Spaces.

the needs of a man, wife and three children.[76] Women's wages were exempt from this, regardless of their family responsibilities. The expectation that women who worked for money, did so for a brief time before marriage. After marriage they and their children would be supported by the male breadwinner.[77] The concept of the 'family wage' was supported by trade unions as a means of maintaining relatively higher male wages and excluding competition from women in the workplace. The alienation of women from paid work in the city created a new and compensatory role for them as the moral and physical guardians of their families in the suburb. The exclusion of women from paid work peaked in the 1920s and 1930s, and then was eroded as women were re-employed during World War Two, as part of the 'reserve army of labour'. The promotion of the domestic role of women re-emerged in the post-war period.[78] The Labour Government's choice of suburban family housing supported and promoted conservative middle-class ideals of the work patterns of the nuclear family.

Ideas about the 'normality' of the nuclear family in its individual detached house were a strong influence on the design of the state house. Some delegates at the 1919 Town-Planning Conference had raised the idea of community kitchens. These were dismissed as too radical, such such notions challenged the ideal of the private nature of the family.[79] Later John A Lee had also found tenement or multi-unit housing an undesirable option because of its association with European city slums. He promoted

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[76] R Chapman, 'From Labour to National', in W. H. Oliver and B. R. Williams eds, The Oxford History of New Zealand , Oxford University Press, Auckland,1988, p.339.

[77] Ferguson, Building the NewZealand Dream, p. 92.

[78] McDowell, 'Towards an understanding of the gender divisions of urban space', pp 59-72.

[79] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p. 77.

the single unit dwelling as appropriate for New Zealand conditions.[80] In his 'Rough Notes on Housing', Lee had written that his department 'would avoid being stampeded into experiment and freak construction' on the inclusion of communal laundries.[81] He was later to promote inner-city high-rise development, while still acknowledging the need for individual homes.[82]

Others felt that the benefits of the single family home were based on its health aspects. A politician in a 1937 parliamentary debate said:

> I would still protest against working-class families having to utilise that type of residence. My reasons are that flats do not provide sufficient light or ventilation, and, generally speaking, they are undesirable for the housing of growing families.[83]

Into the debate on housing crept two separate ideas on the type of family that would be the ideal state house tenant. 'Working-class families' were not neccesarily the same as 'growing families'. The vision of family housing won the day against the idea of workers' housing. Those workers that did not have growing families had to either wait a long time for their state houses or find alternative housing.

Business interests also understood the benefits of promoting the individual home for the nuclear family. The potential market for goods and services to suburbs of individual homes had huge implications for those in building

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[80] Lee, J., 'Rough Notes on Housing', February,1936, p.13, 'Housing General', 3/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives.

[81] Lee, J., 'Progress in Housing', March, 1937, pp13-14, 'Housing General', 3/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives.

[82] Ferguson, Building the New Zealnd Dream, p.139.

[83] Mark Fagan, in New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, quoted by Schrader, 'Planning Happy Families', p.73.

related trades.[84] James Fletcher, the builder, would have understood this well when he approached the Labour Party offering his services in 1935. Product advertisers had also long understood the potential market in the nuclear family home. They promoted the benefits of cleaning and electrical goods to women as consumers through magazine and newspaper advertising. Promotion of the nuclear family home maximised their potential market.[85]

The English cottage shape of the state house presented an introverted aspect to the street. In comparison with earlier Californian bungalows, the houses had small high windows and a narrow front entry which protected the privacy of the nuclear family. The houses had neither front verandahs nor porches for sitting on outside. The front door entry was 'hardly wide enough to accommodate two people standing side by side'.[86] The introverted appearance could be interpreted to represent a blank closed face to the outside world, encouraging the family to live *in* it rather than linger on its front steps. The closed appearance of the houses is, as Schrader has pointed out, at odds with Firth's vision of the streets as an open communal space. The house protects the privacy of the family. Beyond the front door the tenant is immediately enclosed. Peter Shaw notes that the 'planning reflected a highly specialised, even inflexible view of family life'.[87] The

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[84] In 1932, 11,312 people worked in the building trade in various capacities, making it the second largest occupation category after farming. Shaw, New Zealand Architecture, p.118.

[85] Ellen Lupton, from the United States, studied the history of domestic and office machinery and examined how industry promoted goods to women as the 'chief custodians of standards of hygiene' and 'purchasing agent' of the family, thus maximising sales.Lupton, Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines From Home to Office, Cooper-Hewitt, National Museum of Design, Smithsonian Institute, Princeton Architectural Press, 1993, pp7-8.

[86] Shaw, New Zealand Architecture, p.133.

[87] Ibid,.133.

rooms all catered for specific functions; cooking and eating in the kitchen and recreating in the lounge. Older, small houses with coal ranges had tended to have a larger kitchen which served as a multi-function family room.[88] The kitchen/dining room of the state house was not designed to linger in.

The kitchen was scientifically designed, reflecting the importance placed on the housewife as the custodian of her family's health and welfare, and bore a resemblance to a laboratory. Modernist ideas expressed faith that 'all the benefits of the machine age' could be used to eliminate household drudgery. The kitchens were designed to enable the 'woman to run her home with the minimum of walking', and to save 'work with the provision of electrical facilities'.[89] The planning of the kitchen represented a pinnacle of modernist scientific planning. Not all tenants agreed that the planning was successful. An interviewee of Helen May's said:

> I hated the state house. The planning of it was absolutely dreadful. From the kitchen to the wash house was a mile long. It must have been a man who designed it. [90]

State house promotional material reads: 'housewives have excellent laundry facilities and houses are complete with clothes lines'.[91] The assumption was that every house would have a housewife to do the laundry

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[88] Ferguson has shown evidence from earlier in this century that the kitchen was larger in worker housing plans. A small scullery, adjacent to the back door, was used for dish washing, food storage and preparation. This left the kitchen largely free for cooking, eating and relaxing. Building the New Zealand Dream, p.86,

[89] Lee, J.A., 'Progress in Housing', 1937, p.4, 'Housing General', 3/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives. See also State Housing in New Zealand, Ministry of Works, 1949/50, p.8.

[90] May, H., Minding Children Managing Men,: Conflict and Compromise in the Lives of Postwar Pakeha Women, Bridget Williams Books, 1992, pp 85-6.

[91] State Housing in New Zealand, 1949/50, p. 4.

and further suggests that a housewife was the only person who would do the laundry in a state house. The planners saw the home as the woman's place of work, but whether or not their ideas evolved from any discussion with women, or were at all practical, is unclear. Lee wrote: 'A large number of places were visited, and are still being visited, to ascertain the opinion of women actually in their houses as regards to such essentials as electricity against gas.'[92] Although their opinions were gathered there was no suggestion that the Housing Division acted upon them. The planning process excluded women's formal input. Even so, it can be assumed that the architects employed by the Department of Housing Construction had some experience of designing for women as the wives of former clients. The assumption that women as housewives and mothers would be responsible for the daily house-keeping was inherent in the design of the state house.

The kitchen offered designers the opportunity to express their modernist ideas about scientific design. Peter Shaw has noted that in 'the kitchens there was some confusion between public and private spaces; a dining table was frequently placed in a small recess off the kitchen.' [93] The inclusion of a dining table in the kitchen confused that room's male/female public/private categorisation. In some ways this confusion is understandable because electricity had eliminated the coal range as the focal point of the kitchen and the kitchen as the heart of the house. Instead, the open fireplace in the lounge was planned as the focal point and heart of the state house:

> Attention given to the living room in design of State housing is a practical illustration of the aim to keep the family together as a

[92] Lee, J.A., 'Rough Notes on Housing', 1937, pp 2-3, 'Housing General', 3/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives.
[93] Shaw, New Zealand Architecture, p.133.

> unit. Social and recreational centre for at least half the year, the State house lounge is warm, roomy, and comfortable, fills all requirements as a family gathering place.[94]

This quotation refers to an illustration of a state house living room in a publication designed to give publicity to state housing in an election year. It shows a father in his armchair with his family gathered around. Female domestic activities centred in the home may have had the effect of alienating men from the domestic environment. Jock Phillips has written, 'when men finished their work for the day and returned home they entered a family environment ruled over by a mother who was not in paid employment.'[95] In this context it appears that the designers' focus on the living room represents an attempt to include men in the domestic sphere, as well as accommodating a family gathering space away from the kitchen. The illustration reflects Phillips' perception. The mother and girls appear comfortable and relaxed, whereas the father sits awkwardly in his armchair. Although he dominates the image, he is separate from the family, rather than part of it. For men, as husbands and fathers, it appears that they may have experienced a degree of alienation in the home and that efforts were made to affirm their position as a component of the nuclear family.

The nuclear family's gender segregated roles made women and children economically dependent on men upholding their responsibilities as 'bread winners'. Suburban state houses were designed as single unit dwellings, or if double units, they appeared to be one large house. Individual units were thought to increase the tenant's sense of responsibility over the house and surrounding land. Each unit had its own garden shed, or its equivalent in the basement, to contain equipment for vegetable gardening. Tenants,

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[94] State Housing in New Zealand, 1949/50, p.7.
[95] Phillips, A Man's Country, p. 226.

many of whom needed no encouragement, were required to maintain the sections. Miles Fairburn writes that the influence of Arcadian ideas prompted people helped by the state to acquire property to believe that it was their virtue that was responsible for the acquisition, not the state's action.[96] Growing vegetables to supplement income became the means by which men were able to stake a claim on the land and convert its bounty to their own use. Gardening may have had the effect of increasing the tenant's proprietary sense over his home and his responsibility towards his family. The average state house quarter-acre section was of a size that meant that a worker could supplement his wages by growing vegetables, but it was not large enough to lessen his dependency on his wages.

Middle-class nuclear family practices – family size, work habits and need for privacy – were idealised as 'normal' family practices. These ideas of normal nuclear family practices were incorporated into the design of state housing. Individual suburban state housing both reflected and promoted the ideals of this 'normal' family.

Outcome

By drawing together the three ideas that fed into the design it becomes clear how they shaped New Zealand state housing's distinctive and unique appearance. Metge has described the houses as a 'vernacular solution'.[97] The available materials both restricted and influenced the design. Neither material shortages or the architectural influences of modernism were immediately apparent. The Department of Housing Construction appears

[96] Fairburn, The Ideal Society, pp 264-265.
[97] Metge, 'The House that Jack Built, p.41.

to have witnessed struggles between the architects' artistic integrity and political expediency. Ernst Plischke, a highly regarded European modernist had expressed his ideas in plans for the Orakei development. However his designs were radically altered. Flat roofs were replaced with tiled pitched ones, skylights were dispensed with and sun balconies roofed over.[98] The English cottage style won the day.

The National Party in opposition railed against the cost of state houses and the fact that they were being built by government and not private contractors. Mr Kyle, a National Member for Parliament, bemoaned the exclusion of small builders: 'I will guarantee that if the private builder was allowed the same freedom as he had in the past ... he could build houses for 200 pounds less than it is costing the government to build houses today'. He went on to quibble that the skirting boards were only four inches deep, 'yet any decent house has a nine inch skirting board.[99] Material shortages were disguised with imitations of other materials. The asbestos/cement 'fibrolite' was used, lapped to appear like hardwood shingles, and the concrete tile roofing was an imitation of the fired clay tile. Modernist features were contained within the housing structure in standardised factory-made windows and joinery, electric stoves and water heating. The high concrete foundations, that raised the house from the ground and allowed for fresh air to circulate under and around the houses, provided a distinctive aspect of the houses' design and symbolised both the security of their solid foundations and emphasised the lofty aspirations and wholesomeness of the design. Of the roofs, James Fletcher's son John later said,

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[98] Shaw, New Zealand Architecture, p.142.
[99] New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 10 August 1938, Vol.252, p.191.

> The basic criticism, which should have been levied was strangely enough never made – it was believed that by having 400 different designs that the monotony of row housing for example produced would be avoided, but in fact the final product because all the roof pitches were 32 degrees (to suit the concrete and clay roofs) stuck out and until the vegetation grew many streets had a monotonous and institutional look.[100]

Although 400 plans were received by the Department of Housing Construction, it is not clear if all were used. Early streets of state houses, such as those in Riccarton, in Christchurch, show a variety in architectural styles with Spanish mission, Georgian, English cottage and European modernist influences. The designs were simplified and standardised between 1936 and 1949, by which time most state houses became to look very much alike. War restrictions and post-war shortages of building materials added further pressure to reduce both costs and the amount of materials. Stud heights were reduced from nine feet to eight feet two inches in 1943.[101] High foundations, steeply pitched roofs and standard windows readily identified state housing as public property, and allowed the public to take more than a passing interest in their inhabitants.

Allocation and tenants

Because state houses were readily identifiable as such, their inhabitants were also identifiable. Between the years 1936 and 1949, tenants' houses identified them as respectable, Pakeha, young couples with children and sufficient incomes to meet rents that were higher than had been

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[100] John Fletcher, from Fletcher Challenge Archives, quoted by Schrader, who notes that it is written 'albeit in a convoluted way'. 'Planning Happy Families', p.69.

[101] Firth, State Housing, p70.

anticipated. John Lee's proposition that, 'What is wanted is a cross section of the people in every street, running from old-age pensioners to the working man with a family in six rooms with a garage...' did not materialise.[102] Compromises were made in the allocation of state houses to tenants. Lee had wanted a 'cross section', other Labour politicians wanted to prioritise housing for those families living in the worst conditions. Yet others wanted state houses to return sufficient income to recover their costs. The compromise between these positions resulted in a situation where applicants were considered on three criteria: their need for suitable accommodation, their ability to pay the rent and their suitability as tenants.

The applicants went into a ballot, but this process was soon abandoned as many applicants felt that this system was unfair. In late 1937 the system of government-appointed Allocation Committees was introduced. These committees were made up of respectable members of each community who chose tenants from lists of applicants. Whether it was because housing shortages were so acute, or because the new houses were so desirable, the Allocation Committees had to sift through twenty applications for each new house.[103] Even so, the rental costs were too high for many working families. The need to house young families meant that other family groups' housing needs were not given high priority. The housing allocation committees could afford to be particular in their selection of tenants. As a result of the high rents, the acute need for family housing and the Allocation Committees' discretionary selection methods, state housing tended to exclude all but the narrow family type it had been designed for.

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[102] Lee, J., 'Progress in Housing', March 1937, p.18, 'Housing General', 3/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives.

[103] Lee is reported to have quoted this figure in the September, 1937 issue of The Round Table, 'Housing General', 3/1/8, no.2, Housing Division, National Archives.

Houses were allocated on the basis of need to those families whose current housing situation was most desperate, and to those tenants who outwardly displayed values that the committee members placed a high value on. Archives files reveal some of the appalling conditions large families faced. For example, one large family lived in five rooms above a butcher shop, with no outside space for the children to play in and water 'pouring' into all the rooms in wet weather. [104] Whether this family's application succeeded is unknown. However another applicant with a large family was accepted. His situation reveals much about how an applicant was judged within a narrow view of what was seemly and appropriate. In Wanganui in 1949 a 'native Hindu' with asthma, who lived with his wife and eight children in a woolshed, applied for a state house.[105] It was considered that the family would make unsatisfactory tenants because of adverse public opinion, presumably from neighbours. An investigating officer found 'that S. has no furniture at all and the family are living like typical natives.' Mr S's application was accepted and the Wanganui State Advances Corporation was directed to get an 'older house' for him and some furniture from social services or charity. It appears that occasionally in exceptional circumstances (and only exceptional cases were filed) the State Advances Corporation could, and did, waive their guidelines. Mr S's family was expected to adjust their living habits to accommodate furniture. The allocation of the 'older house' indicates that Mr S's family was not considered a suitable tenant for a newer house. In a postscript to this file the writer, presumably an allocation committee member, required 'direction re native tenants other than Maori.' There was no reply attached,

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[104] 'Housing for Large and Needy Families', 35/288, pt2., State Advances Corporation, National Archives.

[105] Ibid.

but the question alone indicates the imprecise nature of the allocation committees' guidelines.

From 1942 ex-servicemen were allocated 30% of all tenancies. This was raised to 50% after 1943. These applicants also went through a screening process that assessed their moral worth as much as their qualities as suitable tenants. Comments such as, 'good type', 'disrepair and filth', 'apparently disinterested type', 'hard working type', 'rat and borer infested ... house clean and children well cared for ...deserving case' indicate that the committees were most interested in housing 'deserving' respectable applicants.[106] The value judgements contained in the applicants' files indicate that the committee members thought that respectability and morals could be judged from outside appearances and had to be seen to be believed. It appears from the comments that the women bore the brunt of proving their families' respectability through their ability to keep a clean house. A poor housekeeper could not have high moral standards.Conversely, excellent housekeeping, especially in adverse conditions, was a reliable indicator of a morally deserving status.

Large families were especially difficult to house, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. State housing was initially focused on satisfying the needs of the 'average' family. Records of the size of applicants' families reveal that childless or one-child couples comprised 64.5% of applicants. This does not imply that these families got houses ahead of larger families, but possibly indicates that young couples pre-empted a long wait for housing by registering their application before their need became urgent with the arrival of more children. In March 1945, two and three-bedroom houses

[106] Ibid.

formed 84% of state houses built. After 1945, 75% of new houses were built with three or four bedrooms as a response to an anticipated demand from larger families.[107] Allocation Committees may have also looked unfavourably on larger families as this in itself may have been interpreted as not respectable. Alternative ideas were explored for housing large families and one proposal to buy existing large houses was investigated cautiously. A State Advances Corporation employee wrote 'it would be unwise to plant a man with a large family into a good residential area', because he considered such a move would harm the neighbourhood if the children were not well behaved.[108] A large family suggested that the parents were not respectable because they were not in control of their fertility, sexuality and their progeny.

The emphasis on the respectable nature of the normal two-parent family appeared inflexible. In a specific case a tenant was allocated a house on the condition that he presented his family as a two-parent family. This divorced tenant was allocated a house in 1948, subject to him taking in his sister to housekeep and care for his three children. His tenancy was terminated when he took in a married couple instead.[109] No other information is given, but it appears that it was the applicant's failure to maintain the appearance of a nuclear family that the State Advances Corporation found fault with. However, the Allocation Committee's gate-keeping sometimes failed. The District Supervisor commented on one case that it was the worst place he had seen. The house was 'filthy and untidy', fittings were missing, the hand basin was broken, the fireplace tiles were broken and loose, and the sill-boards of the windows had been used for

[107] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.136.
[108] Ibid, p.172.
[109] 'Defaulting and Unsatisfactory tennants', 8/1/7, series 1, pt1, State Advances Corporation, National Archives.

chopping wood. It was estimated that the repairs would cost 70 pounds.[110] Not all tenants were as respectable as it was hoped they would be.

Although the original focus of proposed state housing had been on the urgent need to alleviate the poor housing conditions found in inner-city areas, the emphasis on housing the young nuclear family overrode this. Schrader discovered that most of the residents from his study of Naenae had lived there for a long time before entering into state housing, rather than having come from Te Aro in Wellington's central-city. From this evidence Schrader asserts that post-war schemes like Naenae were not so much directed at re-housing the inner-city poor, but aimed at absorbing the post-war population boom.[111] The inhabitants of the inner-city suburb of Te Aro, known to be living in poor housing, did not become the new state house tenants. Schrader gives two reasons for this: the first was that Te Aro was a safe Labour constituency and as such the government had little to gain or lose in that electorate by way of votes. The second reason was that Te Aro's population did not fit the Allocation Committees' family- focused criteria. Te Aro had only 7.9 children per hundred adults whereas Miramar, the site of the first state houses, had 40.1 children per 100 adults. Schrader's finding indicates that in the post-war years, state housing was focused on absorbing the demand for housing from young couples rather than housing inner-city poor.[112] Schrader suggests that pressure for housing was so extreme that the government was taking a practical solution for the crisis.

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[110] Ibid.
[111] Schrader, 'Planning Happy Families', pp122-3.
[112] Ibid, p.58.

Maori families were also largely excluded from state housing. In 1938 Labour passed an amendment to the 1935 Native Housing Act which set up a fund to help needy Maori qualify for housing assistance. However, the focus of this programme was on rural areas, as this was where the most urgent need for Maori housing lay. Officially there was no colour bar to Maori accessing state housing, but until the end of the war there had been little demand from Maori families for urban housing. Maori war veterans had insisted on being treated equally to Pakeha veterans in their rehabilitation. Demands that Maori rehabilitation housing be of an equal standard to new state housing were met, after some debate.[113] However, Maori rehabilitation housing was built predominantly in rural areas. After the war, demand for urban housing increased, but the high rents of state houses operated to alienate most Maori families. There was a growing realisation that Maori post-war urbanisation, especially in Auckland and other North Island cities and towns, was increasing and could not be satisfied by a rural-oriented Maori Affairs Department. This brought a slow response from the State Advances Corporation. Overall, the Corporation failed to meet Maori urban housing needs in this period. By1949, only 100 houses, out of a total pool of about 30,000, were allocated to Maori.[114]

The process of allocation may have been a factor which operated to exclude Maori families from state housing. The State Advances Corporation files reveal that a reason for the lack of Maori tenants could have been that few Maori applications were ever considered by an

[113] Mr Webb, the Member for Kaipara was reported to have said: 'He was not meaning to be derogatory in his remarks, but he considered that the Maoris did not need houses of the same standards as the Europeans'. This was refuted by the Hon. Mr Tirikatene. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 28 September, 1945, Vol.270, p.302.

[114] Butterworth and Young, Maori Affairs, p.91

Allocation Committee. Evidence of the post-war shortages may be seen in the way paper was used and reused. A document intended as an internal memo to branches had been reversed and its clean side used as a cover note for a file. However the back of this cover carried the following memo;

> Branches are advised that if proposed tenant is known or thought of as unsatis [sic] tenant refer to Maori Affairs & if referred back to SAC for allocation refer to H.O. [Head Office].[115]

The memo inplies that tenants who were known or thought to be unsatisfactory would be Maori. It appears as if an unofficial method of dealing with these applicants was to send their applications on a paper trail, possibly until their applications got lost or the applicants found other accommodation. As late as 1959 State Advances Corporation files stated that Christchurch had no Maori tenants.[116] As noted earlier, this may not have been entirely true as a tenancy could well have been in the name of a Pakeha spouse.

Transit camps were set up during the Second World War as an interim measure to cope with the housing shortage. The camps provided temporary accommodation and were run by individual city councils. Each camp had its own criteria for allocating rooms independent of the State Advances Allocation Committees. Residents at the camps were not necessarily on the State Advances Corporation's waiting lists. They may not have been on those lists because their family type did not qualify them for immediate consideration for a state house. Families in transit camps were disadvantaged in the allocation process, because it was believed that their

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[115] 'Memo for Director of Rehab', 2 December, 1949, State Advances Corporation, 35/288, pt2, National Archives.

[116] 'Minutes of a Meeting at Parliament between Rt Hon. Fox, the Minister for SAC, and the Corporation', 17 December 1959, State Advances Corporation, 35/83, pt 2, National Archives.

housing situation in the camps were more secure than others on the waiting lists. By 1947, however, it appeared that transit camp placement may have been regarded as a test of worthiness for a house. The Corporation removed from its list some families who refused take up residence in the camps.[117] The housing shortage continued into the 1949 election year.

In the last year of the of the Labour Government's thirteen year term, the Ministry of Works published a promotional book reviewing the State Advances Corporation's activities. Its Minister, Bob Semple, wrote the foreword:

> State housing is no mere expedient. It was conceived on permanent, practical lines to fill the requirements of the majority of people who are unable to build their own homes. For the first time in New Zealand's history a government recognised the close association between housing and the health and happiness of the people and, in the face of criticism and difficulty, did something about it.[118]

The provision of state housing did grow out of expediency. The housing crisis prompted the need to devise methods that would boost a depressed economy and house people. The form of state houses were the combined results of the influence of organic planning and environmental determinist ideas for worker housing. The goal of worker housing was lost, as the need to house families was greater, and politically more advantageous. Not all families received the benefits. State housing promoted the welfare of the respectable nuclear family at the expense of other, possibly more needy, sections of the community. Genuine concern about children and pro-natalist issues prompted the family-focused allocation of tenancy. The cost of the houses and their allocation, based on the principles of respectability

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[117] Ferguson, Building the New Zealnd Dream, p.174.
[118] State Housing in New Zealand, 1949/50, foreword.

and need, excluded many, especially the very poor, Maori, the elderly and unmarried people.

For some, tenancy in a new state house was a temporary measure. Their long cherished dream was to own their own homes. The National Government had earlier made its position clear on the direction of its housing policy: 'We will approach the housing problem from the standpoint that a home owned is far better than a house rented'. [119] Its policy at the 1949 election had not changed. The idea of owning a home was as appealing to those waiting for a state house, as it was to those renting a state house.[120] A state house was, meanwhile, a good quality housing and a secure tenancy. The following chapter examines how tenants lived in their houses between the years 1936 and 1955.

[119] 'National Party Manifesto, 1938', in McIntyre and Gardner, eds, Speeches and Documents, p.325.

[120] Sophie Watson has explored the idea that the words house and home are not interchangeable; as they both contain different meanings. The idea of 'home' is associated with ideas of ownership, warmth, family, security, etc, whereas the idea of 'house' is associated with a physical dwelling and rental accommodation. Accommodating Inequality, p.6.

Chapter 4

Practices and Resistance, 1936-1955

In late 1947 a memorandum to the Director of Housing Construction from the Housing Division stated that arrangements were being made to publish a book. The memorandum requested that the district supervisor 'please select suitable houses with gardens well grown' for inclusion in the book and that the district supervisor ensure that photographs were 'only to be taken on bright sunny days'.[1] The Housing Division was active in promoting its work. Radio broadcasts, film, news releases and publications such as State Housing in New Zealand, and other similar publications, publicised state housing to a wide audience.[2] This audience included state house tenants. Photographs of tenants, in and about their state houses, and a brief text giving additional information are contained in the booklet. The photographs show tenants posed to represent an idea as an image – a tableau. The photographs, titles and text show happy, Pakeha, nuclear families going about their lives. The weather is 'bright and sunny', the lawns are trimmed and the houses are immaculate. The images convey an impression of suburban utopia, of wholesome respectability. The publication reveals ideas about how the State Advances Corporation wished state house tenants to be seen, especially in an election year. They also raise the question: how representative were these photographs of the state houses and their tenants?

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[1] 'Publicity and Advertising of Housing', 11 November, 1947, 1/35 pt 2., Housing Division, National Archives.

[2] In December 1947, the Housing Division commissioned a film from the National Film Unit at a cost of over 3,000 pounds. A radio broadcast was also made. 'Publicity and Advertising of Housing', 1/35 pt 2., Housing Division, National Archives.

Did the images describe state housing and tenants or did they prescribe an ideal image of how the State Advances Corporation wanted state housing and its tenants to be seen?

This chapter is based on interview material from tenants' remembered experiences of state housing in the years between 1936 and 1955. The material looks at the connections and disparities between the tenants' remembered experiences and the ideology of, and the government policies towards, state housing. The text and illustrations in State Housing in New Zealand imply patterns of living; this and policy and archive material from the previous chapter form a background to the interview material. Because information given by the interviewees was that which they considered to be important, the material covers events prior to and beyond the actual tenancy period. Getting into a state house was an important event in their family histories as state house tenants.

Significantly, the tenants interviewed from this period believed that there was a privilege associated with living in a state house. Being selected as a tenant was an acknowledgment of respectability. WS was seven when his parents moved into their house. They were 'over the moon'; state housing signified to them that they had 'moved up in the world'.[3] They felt proud to be state house tenants. All seventeen of the interviewees, whose histories make up the material for this chapter, were Pakeha. Tenants in this period gained access to their new houses only as members of nuclear families. For both parents and children tenancy in these houses was conditional on each others' existence, as tenancy was restricted to married couples with children. Some tenants did have extended family members living with them. With the exception of WS, whose house was five years old, these tenants moved

[3] WS, taped interview, 3 September, 1997.

into brand new houses in new subdivisions. All the houses of interviewees adjoined, or were very close to, farmland.

For some families, their state housing histories began before their tenancy commenced. The effect of the housing crisis on young couples with children forced some to share houses with family or strangers. Two couples entered into arrangements with existing house owners known as 'boarding the owner'. Under this arrangement the house owner let a room or rooms to the young couple. In return the couple 'kept' the owner, buying and cooking food, doing washing and paying for electricity and fuel. Although 'boarding the owner' did have some advantages, such as lower than otherwise accommodation costs, it was not seen as a viable long-term option. For example, Mr and Mrs D and baby, who had their names down on the list for a state house, boarded two different owners.[4] The first such arrangement had been satisfactory, but the second was not. The owner, an elderly single man seemed to have little faith in Mrs D's housekeeping abilities, re-wiping and cleaning after her efforts. His own personal hygiene standards disgusted Mrs D. He boiled his dirty handkerchiefs on the kitchen's coal range every Saturday morning, which Mrs D found particularly offensive. These irritations and the lack of privacy meant that they saw a transit camp as a viable solution to their housing problem.

The transit camps, an interim measure to cope with the housing shortage, gave residents no guarantee of state house allocation. However Mrs and Mrs D did expect that they would eventually get a state house. Once in the camp, they experienced brief excitement when they were told that preference was being given to Roman Catholics. Their excitement faded as they soon realised that those responsible for allocation could not know their

[4] Mr and Mrs D, taped interview, 1 September, 1997,

religion, as the question had never been asked of them. They thought the rumour had as its core the fact that families with three and four children were given priority for state housing and Catholic families were often larger than average. Mr and Mrs D spent two years in the Hamilton transit camp, during which time they had another child. They had two rooms, their own bathroom and a vegetable patch. Laundry facilities were shared with other residents. They considered the camp to be quite adequate, especially as they were aware that there were many worse off than themselves. Another couple, Mr and Mrs Y and their two young children, also decided that the Christchurch transit camp at Harewood was their best option.[5] Flats were usually not available to couples with children and their previous accommodation with their grandmother had been stressful with the children. This family also spent two years at the transit camp. Both couples enjoyed their time at the camp and made life-long friends there among the other young families.

Others interviewed lived with either their families or their in-laws' families, often in crowded conditions. Mr and Mrs H lived with her parents, grandmother, brother, two sisters and their own baby in a three-bedroom house while they waited for a house to become available.[6] Some claimed the assistance of someone with real or imagined influence who could facilitate their housing allocation. Mr and Mrs H tried to hasten their progress on the waiting list by speaking to Mabel Howard, their local Member of Parliament. They were finally allocated a three-bedroom house which they wanted to refuse on the grounds that it was too large for them and their baby. They were told that refusal would put them back at the bottom of the housing list. P and H M's mother wrote to Arnold Nordmeyer, another

[5] Mr and Mrs Y, taped interview, 8 September, 1997.
[6] Mr and Mrs H, taped interview, 1 September 1997.

Member of Parliament who, as their 'family legend has it', intervened to get them a state house.[7] JD, as a child in Ashburton, remembers her parents asking their friend on the housing allocation committee to speak to the committee on their behalf.[8] Young JC, his brother and parents lived in what they believed to be one of the first state houses built in the South Island. It was in Greymouth on the West Coast, a Labour electorate.[9] JC's father was a prominent member of the Labour Party, but JC was unaware if this had contributed to their being allocated a state house. His father was a senior clerk at the Greymouth Post Office and his mother was ill. He felt that these factors possibly were more relevant to their successful application. Emergency wartime manpower measures accounted for the allocation of another tenant's new house in Waimate, South Canterbury. During the war, Mrs C, her husband, who was a railway engineer, and their child lived in a 'pool' house reserved for transferred civil servants.[10]

Some respondents who moved into state housing in the late 1930s and early 1940s remember blocks of garages on a separate section for tenants to rent. In 1937, John A. Lee had perceived that the average family (and that was what Lee was planning for) was one that needed six rooms and a garage.[11] State housing was not intended to house the very poor, but rather middle-income earners. The occupational status of interviewed tenants from the pre-war and war years confirms this. Although most of the tenants' new houses were four and five-roomed, assuming the laundry and bathroom are excluded, and not Lee's six rooms, the occupations suggest middle-income

[7] PM, taped interview, 3 September, 1997.
[8] JD, taped interview, 2 September, 1997.
[9] JC, telephone interview, 5 September,1997.
[10] Mrs C, taped interview, 3 September, 1997.
[11] 'Progress in Housing' Mr Lee surveys activities to date. Preliminary investigation. March 1937, Housing General. 3/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives.

tenants. Mrs C had a postmaster, self employed baker, schoolteacher and a headmaster for neighbours during the war. In the same years DV remembered her neighbourhood as being populated by civil servants, mostly Post and Telegraph employees. She said that, 'I can't look back and say that they weren't well off".[12] JC's father on the West Coast between 1936 and 1945 was a Post Office clerk; his neighbours had similar skilled, white-collar occupations. The pre-war and wartime occupations of the men had higher socio-economic status than those of the post-war period, when most of the husbands' or fathers' occupations would be loosely classified as skilled tradespeople, often in the building industry. DV's father helped build many new state houses in Dunedin and WS's father painted many.

Moving into a new state house was an important event for the families. The day itself often marked the beginning of their lives together as a nuclear family unit with a home of their own. The women especially remembered the excitement. Mrs W thought 'it was a palace' with 'everything that opened and shut'.[13] The adult tenants from this earlier period expressed a delight in the fact that the house was theirs, that it was rented did not seem to matter. It was secure tenancy; 'it was ours, ... this is home, Mac, we're not shifting any more.' [14] The self-contained nature of the houses was a special thrill. Older houses most often had the laundry and toilet as separate buildings to their rear. Having the laundry, bathroom and toilet within the house was not only more convenient, but added privacy and security. The electric stove was a real boon. Compared with the coal ranges, 'long drop' toilets and tin baths of older flats and houses, a state house presented itself as the most modern, spacious home. DV remembers feeling sorry for her cousins, whose parents

[12] DV, taped interview, 8 October,1997.
[13] Mrs W, taped interview, 15 September, 1997.
[14] Mr S, taped interview, 25 September, 1997.

owned their own home, as they had an outside toilet, laundry and bath. She remembered thinking, as a child, that they must have been poor. However the inside toilet was sometimes not connected to the city sewage system.

Because state housing subdivisions tended to be built on the outer perimeters of towns or cities at a rate of thousands a year, they often outstripped the existing infrastructure of services. Post-war shortages of labour and materials exacerbated this. Some Emmett Block tenants had night-soil collectors for only three or so years, but Harewood and Bishopdale residents waited for ten years before they found another use for their toilet other than a storage room. PC remembers when, in about 1963, her family could finally use the inside flush toilet. Telephone lines were laid on at the same time as the sewers were connected. When her family had both modern conveniences, she thought the occasion was 'really something' important.[15]

For all that the houses had modern facilities, they were bare of curtains and floor coverings. This proved to be a problem for lower-income couples with the financial demands of a young family. Mrs W had saved a 'whole fifty pounds', a considerable amount from wages of four pound a week, to furnish their new house.[16] She was disappointed at how little she was able to buy. Saucepans, a bucket, two mats and a hallway carpet runner, plain net curtains and a ladder to hang them with, took all their savings. She had wanted the frilly lace curtains, fashionable at the time, but had to settle for plain ones. Curtains posed a problem for other couples too. The lack of privacy between houses, bare of screening trees and plants, was compounded by the flatness of Christchurch's terrain. Workmen from

[15] PC, taped interview, 11 September, 1997.
[16] Mrs W.

adjacent houses and the street were able to look in. Because the houses were built to similar plans, corresponding foundation and window heights, neighbours could also look into each others homes. Mrs W. thought it was like 'living in a glass house' and Mrs Y felt that her neighbours knew 'every time you went to the loo'.[17] Some form of window covering was considered essential as a privacy screen. Blankets and sheets were used as a short-term measure until blinds or curtains could be fitted. Skilled sewers made their own. Others, such as Mrs Y, had friends or relatives able to help. A sister was able to get Mrs Y discounted blinds through her work.

The house foundations, which set the floors high and away from damp ground allowing fresh air to circulate, brought another cost to the South Island and Christchurch tenants. Carpets and rugs were needed to insulate against the southerlies as they gusted under the houses of two respondents. Even heavy carpets managed to billow in waves when a polar blast forced its way between the floorboards. WS's house, on Pine Hill in Dunedin, was built on high foundations to accommodate the steep terrain. If the door of the basement laundry and tool shed had been accidentally left open, the results on the carpets and linoleum were spectacular. Mrs W described her foundations as 'hit and miss', in reference to the fact that the foundations were not a continuous solid mass of poured concrete, but concrete piles with slatted timber skirts between each pile for the southerly wind to blow through.[18]

Not all Christchurch houses had this type of foundation. The 'hit and miss' foundations may have been an experiment, brought about by post-war shortages. Post-war shortages of materials caused the Housing Division to

[17] Mrs W, Mrs Y.
[18] Mrs W.

look at alternative methods of construction. Mrs W's house also had asbestos/cement wall cladding; another experimental and material shortage-driven alternative to timber or brick cladding. Nonetheless, the tenants thought that, overall, their houses were well made. The State Advances Corporation had been a good landlord during this time. Maintenance was carried out promptly if needed. Mrs C, who had a state house in Waimate during the war, said her husband even took blown lightbulbs into the local Housing Division office to have them replaced with new ones. This practice may also have been connected with war-time shortages, as the Housing Division could have had a more reliable source of light bulbs than private retailers.

The new tenants, the pioneers of state housing, had their pioneering spirit challenged by the open nature of the street layout. The lack of fencing, deliberately planned to promote the development of community, was at odds with many tenants' ideas of individual property rights. The issue of fencing was mentioned by all the respondents, and dwelt on by many, indicating the importance of this issue to them. Although their houses were rented, the tenants apparently felt that the surrounding section was firmly associated with the tenancy. It was important to have the section clearly delineated with something adequate to mark the boundary; to divide space between houses; to control children and pets and to provide some privacy. The Housing Division had initially provided low concrete walls of approximately 20cm height and depth at the front of houses as a marker indicating the division between one property and another. Secure, solid, wooden fences, parallel with the street, separated the front gardens from the backyards in line with similar fences of the neighbours. The back yard was surrounded with 'cyclone' steel mesh fencing which was neither child or animal proof. Many

of the tenants felt this was inadequate and set about building fences and planting hedges at their own expense.

Fenced properties are a feature of the suburban landscape in New Zealand. The planners of the state housing suburbs had wanted to create an open look, reminiscent of English county cottages opening onto a village green.[19] Often tenants resisted this openness, closing up the landscape by building higher and higher fences as time and finances permitted.[20] The lack of front section fencing confused the area between the street, which was public space, and the house, which was private space. It appears as if many of the residents built fences and grew hedges to reinforce and stake out the family's hegemony. The separation of each house with fences extended the tenant's area of control into the space created behind these. In Riccarton, the low walls remain on some of the state houses' sections, but the openness is now disrupted with fences, walls and hedges giving the area a discordant appearance. However similar unfenced areas could look bleak and uninviting. The action of placing barriers around the sections implies that this was a contested space, but from whom, or what were the residents contesting the space?

Writers on popular culture have pointed out that privacy is the commodity sought by those wealthy enough to position their houses down long

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[19] The cover of the state housing promotional booklet State Housing in New Zealand, reproduced in Ferguson's, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.171, shows a street of state houses with low concrete walls, which serve no other function other than delineating boundaries.

[20] Privately-owned state houses are now almost solely identifiable by their fencing. Unsold state houses can be identified by their low 'cyclone' or picket fencing, or a low narrow concrete wall. This contrasts with many privately-owned ex-state houses with high 6 feet fences.

driveways, or build high walls to conceal their homes from the public gaze.[21] The lack of privacy in the front of state houses may have been an uncomfortable reminder of the cottages and tenements in older poor areas of the cities. Older working-class housing had the front door separated from the street by a narrow verandah, porchway or tiny garden. The amount of space between the public street and the private home was minimal.[22] This association between poverty and lack of privacy, and middle-class respectability and privacy may have been what prompted many to place or grow barriers between them and the public streets and footpaths. Christchurch citizens seem to have placed more importance on a high fence to secure property and privacy than residents of other cities in New Zealand. The reasons for this are unclear, although the flat landscape may contribute to this. State house planners eventually relented in the face of residents' obvious wishes and included low fences in the design of many areas, or installed low fences across the front and sides of the sections.

The state house sections, having recently been farmland, had soil which was usually full of 'twitch' or quitch grass. Except for those on steep sections, with accessible basements, houses were provided with a garden shed. The sections needed to be planted in potatoes for at least a year before the twitch runners could be eradicated and lawns and garden laid. That the section was bare and still full of building rubble did not deter Mr Y. He dug a pit to bury the rubble and had a vegetable garden planted before work on the Monday after he moved in. All the respondents in this period had vegetable gardens, from which the husbands and fathers supplied not only their family but often

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[21] Fiske, J., Hodge, B., and Turner, G., 'Homes and Gardens', in Myths of Oz: Reading Australian Popular Culture, Allen and Unwin, Sydney,1987, pp 26-52.

[22] Christchurch has a row of tenements in Durham Street South. They have been renovated and are now offices.

the neighbourhood as well. In this sense their role as bread-winners extended beyond working hours and into their leisure time. The provision of fruit and vegetables was an essential element of their role as husbands and fathers. For many, vegetable gardening may have simply been economic necessity, but there are indications, especially from the children of respondents, that gardening meant more than a home-grown supplement to wages.[23]

The enthusiasm many of the men devoted to gardening raises questions.[24] Were they keen gardeners in order to get away from the stressful house as Robin Boyd has suggested?[25] Did they welcome the opportunity to develop creative skills to grow and nurture plants? Or was there a desire to control a piece of land and everything that grew in it? Gardening involves many decisions about what shall live and die, be pruned or allowed to flourish. Lawns, edges and hedges also needed cutting regularly. JS remembers her father being zealous in his pursuit of the perfect garden. As a child she

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[23] Miles Fairburn in The ideal Society discusses the importance of working a plot of land in New Zealand ideology. The Arcadian ideology promoted the idea that the bounty of the land could be extracted and appropriated by work. Vegetable gardening was a significant aspect of this ideology. The produce of the garden supplemented wages and decreased a man's dependence on his employer. However the state house quarter acre section was not large enough to support the family and free the tenant from the necessity of paid employment.

[24] For example, Frank Sargenson's well known and cryptic short story, 'The Hole that Jack Dug', explores this subject. The story does not make Jack's motivation for digging clear, but raises many possibilities. Some other Country: New Zealand's Best Short Stories, Unwin Paperbacks and the Port Nicholson Press, 1984.

[25] Robin Boyd wrote about the relationship between the nuclear family and post-war suburban housing. He contended that the suburban house was not a comfortable home for any of its members. 'In a land of the free, the houses of the free were narrow, straight laced, smug. ...Family life had become ... for the male ... a fruitless search for quietness and peace in a jungle of kitchen and cleaning equipment and dissatisfied children.' Australia's Home: Why Australians built the way they did. 1978, Penguin Books, Australia, p. 281.

would not have dared to put a foot on his garden for fear of a smacking. Her outdoor play area was confined to the smaller space in front of the house.[26] Although the men saw their vegetable gardens as an essential part of their role as family providers, not all gardened cheerfully. LO remembers keeping out of her father's way on Saturday afternoons, which were his gardening days and his last chore of the week. He seemed always to be bad tempered until he was finished.[27] Mrs W's husband, on the other hand, always left a section of the garden fallow and encouraged his children and neighbours' children to play in it. Mrs W's daughter, BL remembers the massive roadworks, tunnels and bridges they created in the vegetable garden. BL thought that the attention men applied to their gardens was a form of therapy that returned servicemen engaged in to help themselves overcome the terrible memories of the war's destruction and chaos. BL felt that, consciously or unconsciously, the men were attempting to create something beautiful and restore growth, productivity and order in their quarter-acre sections, and by extension, the world.[28] This explanation is convincing, reflecting as it does, Britain's 'digging for victory' war propaganda in a parallel 'digging for peace' in a post-war atmosphere.

Men were not the only diggers for peace on the home front. Concepts of masculinity and femininity were involved in the division of labour. 'Mum did the front flower garden and Dad the vegie garden; you never saw Mum at the back or Dad at the front', commented PC.[29] DV was sure she never saw women working in the vegetable garden, and even half-jokingly theorised that perhaps growing vegetables was considered 'too complicated

[26] JS, taped interview,10 September, 1997.
[27] LO, taped interview, 26 September, 1997.
[28] BL, notes from personal interview, 30 September, 1997.
[29] PC, taped interview, 11 September 1997.

for women'.[30] The vegetable garden was not seen as part of their role. DV also remembers, as a child in Dunedin, the men going off on a Saturday to do the vegetable gardens of women whose husbands were away at the war. The real work happened at the back of the house, as opposed to the decorative and comparatively unproductive work at the front. Although women, and sometimes the children, did sometimes work in the vegetable garden, their front flower gardening was seen as a leisure activity because its economic value was difficult to ascertain.

For all that the garden at the front of the house was seen as ornamental, it served another and more important purpose: that of providing an image of middle-class respectability. A neat tidy and flourishing front garden achieved two things: it provided a clear barrier between the public space of the street and the private space of the section and house. It also provided a shop window to display the inhabitants' values to the outside world. A flourishing, well-kept garden advertised to the public that all was flourishing and well-kept inside the house. Most of the residents from the period between 1936 and1955 remembered their own and their neighbours' flower gardens as being beautiful.

Were they all beautiful? Archival evidence suggests not. A departmental file titled 'Defaulters or Unsatisfactory Tenants' contains a note in which a neighbour alleged that a resident had gorse five feet high and grounds that were 'completely uncultivated'.[31] The complainant probably meant that the residents were also completely uncultivated in that they had not subscribed to the neighbourhood's standards of tidiness. Mr and Mrs D refused the first

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[30] DV.

[31] 'Defaulters or Unsatisfactory Tenants', 8/1/7, Series 1 pt1., State Advances Corporation, National Archives,

house they were offered on the basis that it was a 'disgusting mess' with 'metre high grass, broken glass and rubbish thrown anywhere'.[32] The Housing Division may have been sympathetic: their refusal to accept the untidy house did not substantially jeopardise the Ds' position on the list. The Ds also remember a neighbouring family from the 1950s who dealt with their garden by driving a car around and around the section to flatten the grass. P and his brother HM remember a large family in their neighbourhood with great amusement and affection. It seems that this family was very large with eight children and made a habit of breaking many of the unwritten rules of respectability in their neighbourhood. Their grass was not mowed and they kept furniture outside on the front lawn, disturbing P and H's mother's ideas of how things should be done. DV thought that in her Dunedin suburb nobody would have dared not attending to their garden.[33] She felt that if they had persisted in neglecting the gardening, the neighbours would have done the work for them, as they had done for the soldiers' wives in the war. Peer pressure, or 'keeping up with the Joneses' was a factor in families maintaining their gardens to a high standard. Having a neighbour who did not maintain their property may have marked it as belonging to an unrespectable neighbourhood. The privacy gained by placing fences and hedges around the property may have been a method of escaping neighbours' judgement of personal gardening habits or the marking of boundaries between a respectable household from its unrespectable neighbours.

The interviewed tenants' relationship to the sections went beyond gardening for the sake of maintaining a respectable frontage and the supply of vegetables. Land ownership has long been held as a desirable goal and asset

[32] Mr and Mrs D.
[33] DV.

in New Zealand Pakeha society. Ownership of the land signified the right to cultivate it and possess the ensuing crop. For those who were unable to achieve ownership, cultivation still indicated land rights, in the sense that the crop became owned by the grower. The use of the land appears to have signified land rights in the sense that its cultivation could be seen as a statement of the occupier's citizenship. These ideas harked back to the colonial days when property-owning, voting rights and hence citizenship were allied. A pioneering spirit re-emerged in the tenants. Where, one hundred years earlier, men had broken in the bush, rode the boundaries and hunted for meat, in the new raw urban frontier this spirit reappeared. In Harewood and Wainoni the quitch was cleared, the hedges were pruned and father brought home vegetables from the garden. The act of gardening was important to the families interviewed for varying reasons. Gardens meant different things to different families. BL, whose garden was a play space, thought that the attention men gave their gardens may have been an important factor in their post-war rehabilitation. Others such as JS and LO saw the garden as a source of conflict and stress, although for J S's father it was his passion. PC and DV's fathers gardened competitively to raise the largest and most bountiful crops. PC's father gave his surplus away to friends, relatives and neighbours, but DV's father entered best specimens in horticultural fairs. For the women the front garden gave them a relaxing and creative opportunity to display their respectable social values and gardening skills.

The tenants' proprietary spirit was not always restricted only to the gardens. They also took on the responsibility of painting and papering the inside of the houses. Whether or not the tenants decorated because the Housing Division did not do this as often as the tenants wished, or because the tenants wanted to personalise their houses with their own choice of colours

and patterns, is unclear. The Housing Division painted and papered the interiors every ten years or so, and the exteriors every fifteen or twenty years. Other than for this and for other routine maintenance, representatives from the Housing Division did not visit the tenants. In Dunedin, AH had noticed that state houses were distinguishable on the outside from privately-owned houses by their drab colour schemes. Shades of putty, taupe, grey, sage and beige predominated. The interiors were similarly conservative. The women interviewed were house-proud, but they also had young children, who, in spite of their parents' best care, knocked paintwork and grubbied wallpaper. House-proud couples decorated their homes with paints and papers of their choice rather than have the limited colour schemes the Housing Division offered.[34] Mrs H found that when her husband was out of town with work she had more discretionary time. She filled this time by setting for herself the target of painting or papering a room as a project during his absence. She thought that during these years she had gained considerable proficiency at this work. Mr and Mrs I worked together in the evenings painting the kitchen after the children were in bed. Several of the respondents mentioned having bought fitted carpets for the lounge and hallways of their state houses. These carpets, tailored for an individual room and not readily movable to another site, represented a considerable financial outlay. Their purchase indicates a significant financial and emotional commitment to the house and their intention of living there for a long time.[35]

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[34] The Housing Division did pay for the materials tenants used, but the tenants were expected to pay the extra money for papers that were not within the allowable price range. Because of import restrictions and post-war shortages, wallpaper patterns were limited anyway at this time.

[35] Both Mrs W and Mr and Mrs Y were interviewed in the homes they had rented since 1949 and 1950, respectively. Their homes and gardens were immaculately kept. Their long commitments to their properties stemmed, in part, from their labour and financial investment to them.

During the week the men worked hard, mostly in jobs that were physically demanding. Some had two jobs, arriving home late and exhausted in the evenings, wanting little more than dinner, an hour of the radio and their beds.[36] The extra job some of the men had was an acknowledgment that one wage was barely sufficient to meet the basic costs of living. The vegetable garden, a further chore for some, was essential to supplement wages. A considerable number of the respondents also kept chickens for eggs and meat.[37] The extra part-time job was needed to get ahead. Few of the men had much time for the children after work, although two fathers remembered playing cricket and tennis in the quiet streets with their children and neighbours on summer evenings.[38]

Stereotypical New Zealand men are caricatured as being overly passionate about rugby, racing and beer. Among this sample, few respondents drank alcohol regularly. Mr D claimed 'money was too tight for that'.[39] Others were abstemious on religious grounds.[40] JB's father brought home a half gallon every Saturday afternoon to mark the end of his working week and, as she became a teenager, B was invited to share a lemonade shandy with him. When asked if her father ever went to the pub, JB replied that 'he wouldn't have been allowed to even if he'd asked.'[41] Some of the children of tenants felt that their mothers were the dominating partner in their parents'

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[36] Mr D worked in two jobs. He remembered many of his neighbours doing likewise. Mr Y worked a second job at the weekends.

[37] Unfortunately it did not occur to me to ask about keeping chickens. I do not know exactly how widespread this practice was, but after most of the interviews were complete, I made a point of asking. The responses indicated that running hens was widespread. Five of the five families asked this question had kept a few hens.

[38] Mr D and Mr H.

[39] Mr D.

[40] Mrs I and her husband never drank alcohol.

[41] JB, taped interview, 27, August, 1997.

relationship, especially in matters of alcohol consumption.[42] Families could lose respectability quickly, especially if the breadwinner spent too much of the family's income on drink. Alcohol often led to violence in one household. JS remembers her mother hurrying herself and her siblings to bed before their father got home from the pub in order to avoid the inevitable conflict. To this day she resents being belted by her inebriated father 'for not drying the dishes properly'.[43] The second and third facets of the stereotypical Kiwi male's social life, rugby and horse racing, was not an important aspect of the male interviewees' leisure activities. However, the histories from this period were mostly told by the women, and it was the women who were required to maintain the external standards of respectability. They would, therefore, be anxious to downplay the role of rugby, racing and beer in their families' lives.[44] If the men had subscribed to these activities in their youth, they had left them behind with the arrival of family responsibilities.

Respectability had to be self evident. A family had to look respectable. Liz Stanley's study of the relationship between a Victorian servant and her employer offers a way of looking at the associations between dirt,

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[42] The following extract from Bill Pearson's 'Fretful Sleepers', (first published in Landfall, 1952) supports interviewees' thoughts that women were the dominant partners in the suburban homes. Pearson also raised the point that men had little privacy in the suburb, as their role was outside the home. 'Why have I settled on his drinking habits and stuck there? Because it is in the pub – and in his football club and or the race-course – that an important part of his life is lived. His private life, at home, is in his vegetable garden and the workshop. For the rest, his home life is the perpetual requisition of jobs to be done, of watching what he says in front of the children: he has to go to the public house to have privacy. It is the one place where his doings don't become the property of his wife's woman friends.' in Calder, A., ed., The Writing of New Zealand: Inventions and Identities, Reed, 1993. p. 181.

[43] JS.

[44] McCalman, Struggletown,

cleanliness and social status.[45] Lower-class people, according to Victorian thinking, were dirty and unrespectable, whereas middle-class people were clean and respectable. Lower-class people cleaned up the dirt of the middle classes. The connections between dirt and lack of respectability were seen in the attitudes of the women of the study. Although most of the men were engaged in work that required them to get dirty, their wives, the children and their homes were presented as clean and respectable. The responsibility for the maintenance of the clean, respectable appearance fell on the women. It was up to them to present the house, surroundings and contents as clean, tidy and well cared for. This took a massive amount of work. Mrs H exclaimed, 'wash, wash, wash! All I ever did was wash, wash, wash.'[46] The copper in the laundry had to be lit in order to boil the water to wash the clothing and linen. None of the respondents from this period had washing machines in the early years of their marriage. The weekly wash generally took all morning. Standards of cleanliness were exacting. Concrete steps, the external sign of respectability within, were scoured; floors were scrubbed and then wax-polished. The routine of cleaning, cooking and washing took up the entire week.

Yet, some of these women claimed, 'I didn't work after I was married'.[47] In one sense they did not work, even though their whites were as white as those who felt their house-work was never ending. Work equals paid employment not only in the eyes of the census takers.[48] For some women of this time,

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[45] Stanley, L., ed, The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick: Victorian Maidservant, Rutgers University Press, London, 1984.

[46] Mrs H.

[47] Mrs I claimed not to have worked after marriage, She had six children as well as several foster children. Others, such as JB and WS, also claimed that their mothers did not work after marriage.

[48] Marilyn Waring demonstrates that paid work is counted as economically productive and unpaid work as economically unproductive in most economies, despite the realities of the particular situation. Counting for

being a wife and mother was a role to be undertaken and was not seen as work, but was the consequence of being in this role. Most of the women underplayed their work. The children tended to support this perception. They knew that their fathers worked long hours and were not home until late, but when asked what their mothers did, they replied with vagueness, indicating that they just did things around the house. LO, as an adult, recognises now that her mother must have been extremely busy servicing the needs of a household of nine or more.[49] Her mother, when asked to describe her day, said she did 'just what a housewife does.'[50] Housework, like flower gardening, is difficult to define as 'work' if it is not seen by the worker as anything more or less than the thing one does in a day, or if it appears to be of indeterminate economic value. Those women who enjoyed sewing took a special pleasure in making their children's clothes and regarded doing this as relaxation rather than an economic activity. The same could be said for those who enjoyed gardening, cooking or knitting. The economic impact of their work, and relaxation, was *invaluable* rather than lacking in value.

As a corollary, domestic work was done in private. The front areas of the house, designed to be seen by the public from the street and from within by visitors, were less private than those areas at the back of the house where the work was done. Schrader's study of Naenae looks at how communal laundries were rejected from the original plan as a result of pressure.[51] John A. Lee wrote that the state house planners should 'avoid being stampeded

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Nothing: What men value and what women are worth, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1988.

[49] LO.

[50] Mrs I.

[51] Schrader, 'Planning Happy Families', p.137

into experiment and freak construction' of communal laundries.[52] Most women did not like the idea of communal laundries either, they preferred to wash their dirty linen in private. Economic considerations were outweighed by privacy considerations and each state house had its own washing copper and tubs. From the street, the state house presented itself and inhabitants as the model of respectability. Service areas were positioned to the back and sides of the house, where the routine maintenance was done out of sight. JB's mother kept their Mt Roskill home in an 'excessively' immaculate condition in spite of her chronic illness.[53] JB and her sister were encouraged to play outside as much as possible, or at neighbour's houses, rather than bring other children home to their house, in case they made a mess. For JB's mother to maintain her standards must have been difficult. Curtailing the children's activities was the way that she was able to manage this. The alternative for her would have resulted in additional work, when she was already struggling with what she had. Women were caught in a double standard that demanded that they and their houses and children appear spotlessly clean and tidy in public, but that the work involved in achieving this should be performed unseen, in private. The children and the mothers both paid a price for this.

None of the women interviewed worked outside the home during this period. This may have been attributable to the young ages of the children. Mrs D, who had six children, took in dressmaking to supplement the family income. She said that in areas where they had lived it was common practice for women to turn to skills they could use from home to supplement their income. Her husband also worked at a second job. In 1951 Mrs H fell and

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[52] 'Progress in Housing, Mr Lee surveys activities to date.' Preliminary investigation March 1937, Housing General, 3/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives.

[53] JB.

hurt herself.[54] She had to send one of her boys to the far end of the street for help, because this neighbour was the only other woman in the street who was also at home during the day. All the other women in the street had been away at work.

Not surprisingly, few women claimed to have much leisure time. What leisure they had was spent with friends and family. DV, on the steep and relatively inaccessible Pine Hill, remembers that their family's social life was centred on the local school and its hall which doubled as a community hall. Plunket Mothers' meetings where her mother was active, horticultural shows where her father competed for the produce prizes, cards evenings, and dances were all held here. All but two of the adult respondents from this period went to church on Sundays, after which they often had friends home for lunch or went to visit friends. However, Mrs D who was active in her church, said that she sometimes felt constrained about visiting friends because of her large family. She felt that other families saw her family as too large, and was aware of social pressures that implicated large families with unruly behaviour. Mrs D felt that people thought 'a family of four was a family but a family of eight was a tribe.'[55] Few women went to the movies, either with their women friends or families; given the transport difficulties, this was not surprising. Late night shopping in the city was not strictly a leisure-time pursuit, but this did give women an opportunity to put on a hat and gloves, meet friends and show themselves as respectable members of the community.

Only two respondents from the period to 1955 had cars. Those who had cars were generous. P and HM, whose family did not own a car, remember being

[54] Mrs H.
[55] Mr and Mrs D.

squeezed into the back of their neighbour's car for outings. Mrs W's husband used their car to take the family to the river. They ate a picnic, swam, gathered firewood and shot rabbits for the pot – successfully combining economically useful activities with leisure. The lack of cars was not a hardship for the children as it meant that the streets were safe for children to play in. As farmland was most often immediately beyond the neighbourhood, the children were able to safely explore their wider world. Those who had bikes rode huge distances to the beach or river. BL, in the Emmett Block which was in a constant state of development between 1949 and 1957 or later, had an old farm orchard to play in with her friends. She felt safe because the builders kept an eye out for them, reminding them when it was time to go home for tea or warning them away from dangerous situations. BL, who had had a portion of the vegetable garden to play and make roadworks in, was lucky in having parents who allowed her a reasonable amount of freedom. She also had farming neighbours who did not mind children on their property. WS from Dunedin also had a neighbouring farm on which the state housing children felt free to play. The farmer often gave swede turnips, a winter stock food and also a tasty cooked vegetable, to the neighbouring families. JS and her sisters did not have the freedom of their adjacent property. There were no parks and swings in their neighbourhood and their play space was restricted to the front garden of her home or inside the house. Over the road from their house, apple orchards did not offer the same opportunity to play as open farmland did. JS thought that their relative confinement was a factor in their being disciplined more often than other children were. Wet weather also kept children inside. Mrs H allowed her sons to ride their tricycles inside on wet days on the condition that their tricycles never bumped or scratched the walls or doors. The children became highly skilled at tearing up and down the hallway without touching the walls.

DV's after school job in Dunedin was to run down the hill to the dairy for the bread and meat. She had a younger sister and their home on steep Pine Hill was not well serviced with either buses or shops. Her mother would have found it extremely hard to negotiate the 217 steps with a toddler and the groceries. DV could run home in twenty minutes! Post-war shortages extended to services. Bus routes did not fully reach all the new state housing areas, located as they were on city and town perimeters. Bus services were geared to coincide with workers' and high school pupils' needs and not those of housewives. Meat, bread and milk delivery vans serviced some areas and helped meet some consumer needs, but the women still needed to travel to the local shops or the city. Mrs Y remembers how hard it was to push the cane pram over the unmade gravel roads.from Papanui, where the bus stopped, to Bishopdale. The roads remained in this state for ten years until the residents were connected to telephone services at the same time as the roads were sealed. The relative isolation of such suburbs to shops and services coincided with the years when the mothers had young children. The combination of isolation and small children would have contributed to keeping the mothers tied closely to their homes and neighbourhoods and may have gone some way towards accounting for the care lavished on their homes and gardens.

Church-going played a considerable role in the lives of the adults. Five of the eight respondents who were adult tenants prior to 1955 were regular church goers. For two of these families, their religious faith was an integral aspect of their daily life. Mr and Mrs D's children went to Catholic schools. This involved financial commitment as well as regular church attendance for the parents. The Salvation Army's principles guided Mrs I's family life. This involved church services two or three times on Sunday and a daily lived

commitment.[56] Mrs I's commitment was such that she fostered a child into her family on a long-term basis, adopted another and had many other short-term foster children, as well as the five children of her own. Her daughter, LO, clearly remembers the stressed look on her father's face, as he sliced paper-thin Sunday roast left-overs for all the Monday night diners. With the exception of Mrs C, whose children were babies during their tenancy, all the respondents sent their children to Sunday school. The children remembered being dressed up in their best clothes. The girls wore freshly washed, starched and ironed dresses and the boys wore shirts and ties. JB showed a photograph of herself and her sister dressed for an outing, possibly church, in matching lacy cotton lawn dresses and hair ribbons. LO's retrospective analysis is that it was all about appearances: 'dress them up, out into the garden, line them up, take a photo, look at how beautifully brought up they are, clean, tidy, well dressed, well fed, they must be the perfect family.'[57] LO believed that the emphasis on presenting a neat and tidy external appearance, and photographing it for posterity, may have disguised the possibility that behind the posed image all may have not been well. The emphasis on external appearances of respectability may have covered internal domestic difficulties. It is also as likely that the families may have simply wanted reminders of their houses and children at their best, as a permanent reminder of their attractive outward appearance.

Plunket was another opportunity for the babies to be shown to the public for inspection. Although this service was not obligatory for mothers, all the parents interviewed from this period used Plunket's services. The post-war generation were grateful users of the service. These women's own mothers

[56] Mrs I was aged 75 when she was interviewed in the Salvation Army Thrift Shop. She had worked here, as an unpaid volunteer, since her youngest child started high school.

[57] LO.

had probably formed the first generation of Plunket mothers. Research has indicated that the first Plunket mothers tended to cheat the rigid schedule, giving extra feeds, especially if they had support from their own mother.[58] However Plunket's methods were uncritically established during the post-war period because new mothers in new suburbs were often physically distant from their own mothers' support. Also Plunket had modified some of its more rigid prescriptions in this period. In particular, it had conceded that new babies did need to be fed during the night. New mothers found the home visits, advice and reassurances of the Plunket nurse to be a godsend. The Plunket nurse visited the mother and baby each week at home for three or four weeks, or until the baby was old enough to attend the local Plunket rooms for further health check-ups.

For an organisation that was essentially a well-baby clinic, Plunket was remarkably prescriptive. The Plunket nurses tended to be well meaning, unmarried, childless, middle-aged and middle-class women. Their advice was authoritative and 'scientific'. Part of Plunket's appeal lay in the fact that it gave mothers a sense that they were good mothers if they did as they were told. Plunket's regime was especially successful for mothers with a first child and little extended family support. This was the situation many of the new mothers were in, in the poorly serviced suburbs. With a second child, mothers' confidence increased and Plunket visits became more a reassurance than a lifeline. Mrs W practised the rigid schedule on her first child:

> When I got my son I was scared silly of him, I tried to go by the book but, oh the poor little beggar, but I'm glad I got him first, I think I'd have gone batty if I'd had the twins first. I found that babies

[58] Mein Smith, P., Mothers and King Baby: Infant Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World 1880-1950, MacMillan Press, London, 1997. pp162-191.

> don't go by the book, but oh, they were a great help. I'd have been lost without them.[59]

This statement sums up the attitude of many mothers of this period who were living in isolated suburbs. The help they got from Plunket, prescriptively rigid as it was and difficult to practise, was help after all. Little else was available if one discounted the advice of neighbours.[60] After the Plunket nurse stopped coming to visit her, Mrs Y found the gravel roads were too difficult to manage with a pram to take the babies to the Plunket rooms often. She said sarcastically that her neighbours were only too ready with advice anyway, indicating that she felt the neighbours' opinions, while readily available, were not necessarily what she considered to be the right ones.

Part of the success of Plunket's child-care methods at this time lay in its being the authority in all matters concerning infant care and especially on bottle-feeding.[61] The bottle and breast-feeding mothers did not make the decisions when and how much to feed the baby, nor did the babies, the Plunket nurse did. For a breast-feeding mother, the lack of good advice and reassurance acted to undermine her confidence that she and the baby were doing well if the baby was not behaving as a 'good baby' should. Bottle-feeding was most often seen as the first alternative solution to any breast-feeding problems. As a result of this most women lost their ability to breast-

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[59] Mrs W.

[60] Alternative ideas about child care did not emerge as part of the mainstream of child-care theory until the 1960s, when both Dr Spock's The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care, first published 1945, and Parents Centres made new, and comparatively liberal, inroads into child-care practices.

[61] The Plunket Society's Guide Book for Infant Health Nurses, 1957, in its instructions for the 'dieting of normal babies', contains one page of breast feeding, another page on supplementary feeding and thirteen pages on artificial feeding.

feed successfully for more than a few months, as a successful breast-feeding relationship was dependent on women having the confidence to trust their bodies to supply the baby's needs on demand. Breast-feeding plummeted throughout this period to an all time low by the late 1960s.[62] Breast-feeding was difficult to maintain under a rigid four-hourly feeding schedule. However bottle-feeding, promoted as scientific, safe and reliable, and (if done according to Plunket methods) most often produced fat, healthy looking babies. By today's standards these were overweight babies.[63] Big fat babies were an important sign of good mothering as weighing and measuring was the means by which Plunket nurses used to check the babies and, by extension of this, the mothers' practices.

After the babies left the playpen their behaviour continued to be disciplined and controlled. Again families, and especially women, were judged on their children's behaviour. The incidence of corporal punishment is noteworthy. Kevin Ireland has written that delivering the Auckland Star after school in suburban Auckland,

> Was an education in injustice and cold-blooded violence...shouts, slamming doors, terrible blows and the screams of children – all issuing from behind the shaved lawns, the short-back-and-sides hedges, the starched and pleated weatherboard bungalows.[64]

Although Kevin Ireland has not specified that these houses were state houses, the description fits. For Ireland, much of the terror he associated with the hidings seemed to be because the discipline was enacted behind the 'starched and pleated' exteriors of the houses. The controlled and disciplined

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[62] Ritchie, J. and Ritchie, J., Child Rearing Patterns In New Zealand, A H and A W Reed Limited, New Zealand,1970, p.31

[63] Janet McCalman points out in that in 1964 'at the height of the artificial feeding and "fat is bonny" fashion, the average weight for a six months old baby was a kilo heavier and clearly overweight.' Struggletown, pp209-210.

[64] Kevin Ireland, 'One of the Bohemians,' Michael King, ed, One of the Boys: Changing Views of Kiwi Masculinity, Heinemann, Auckland,1988. p.89.

exteriors hid 'cold blooded violence'. Ireland points out that many of his contemporaries have no similar memories of being hit by their parents. He believes these memories are suppressed. Only two of my respondents were not smacked or did not smack their children, the rest were all smacked, belted, or thrashed. Those respondents who were parents were consistent in how they underplayed this practice as being little more than as a sharp smack delivered in the child's best interest. Comments from the parents such as ' I believe in smacking', 'spare the rod; spoil the child', were made as an explanation, motivation or justification.

The children, however, gave a different account. They were more likely to believe that they had done something to 'ask for it' and, therefore, they often felt the smacking had been justified. DV, out of spite, cut the brim off her sister's hat on the only occasion she remembers being smacked, but felt convinced that she had deserved the punishment.[65] Others remember being chased with sticks, wooden spoons and jug cords. Some respondents, especially those who had neighbours with large families, remember those children being frequently punished. One such family, a sailor's 'grass widow' and her eight children, neighbours of P and HM, were often punished by their mother. They were seen as a 'rough' and unruly family compared with their respectable neighbours. The family was associated with happy, relaxed, good times in the M brothers' memories. The family appeared, to P and H, to take little notice of neighbourhood standards of respectability. In the kitchen of their state house they had taken off the cupboard doors, covering the fronts with wire netting and installed a budgerigar aviary in the cupboard space. The cupboard doors were used as firewood. The mother was left to care for the family with an irregular and inadequate income while her husband was at sea. P and H knew that there was very little money in the

[65] DV.

family. Their own mother tried to help out through their church with clothing. Both P and H enjoyed their contact with this family and their 'larger than life approach', even as they were aware that their garden and behaviour were not considered respectable.[66] They remember that even though these children were often given hidings, they were always given huge hugs and cuddles afterwards. To the M brothers it seems that, although they knew that these children were corporally punished, the punishment did not seem to control their unruliness, or create an unpleasant atmosphere in the house.

Children's fighting was most likely to incur the parents' wrath, although it seems ironic that parents inflicted pain on their children in order to stop them inflicting pain on their siblings. The idea that children ask or deserve to be smacked was so ingrained that the children themselves believed it to be true. JS, belted by her father for not drying the dishes properly, knew she had done nothing to deserve or ask for such measures. She had simply annoyed her drunken father. How much these children were belted because their parents were already in a bad mood or stressed by some other event is unknown. It cannot even be guessed at by children who often came to believe that they had deserved what discipline was meted out to them.

During this period children, particularly boys and adolescent boys, were smacked and caned at school in an effort to control their behaviour. However this tended to have perverse results. Those boys punished gained a heroic status which could only be maintained by their engaging in more bad behaviour and receiving another caning. The Duke of Edinburgh was presented by New Zealand Woman's Weekly as the ideal modern father. He would not only have fun with his children, but also provide mild discipline:

[66] PM and HM.

'the Duke duly administered a good tempered spanking' on occasions.[67] In reporting the story, the magazine had also signalled its approval of corporal punishment, ignoring the irony that the smacking administered by the Duke was *'good tempered'*. It was not delivered out of anger as a bad tempered hiding. Corporal punishment, institutionalised in schools, was approved of by royalty. That two sets of parents interviewed did not smack, indicates that some did question the issue of corporal punishment and made conscious decisions not to smack their children. Most respondents continued to believe that their children's behaviour should be corporally punished if it could not be controlled.

It does appear that the parents were aware of the contradictions between the respectable exteriors and the interiors which contained human life in all its imperfections in state housing areas. The adults knew that although all the houses were the same, this did not mean that the families were all the same. The prescriptive ideas of parenting and state house tenancy implied that with similar housing, income and life style to one's neighbours meant one would be a similar person to one's neighbours and adopt the same values and lifestyle. This idea may well have prompted tenants to adopt the outward signs of compliance with those unwritten rules, such as sending their children to Sunday school and maintaining neat and tidy house fronts. However, the tenants were selective about who they invited into their homes. Visits between neighbours were formal and pre-arranged. In this way the tenants could maintain their privacy and control their neighbours' knowledge of their household. Smacked children could have been interpreted by neighbours as a sign to the outside world that the children had done something wrong, the mother was not coping or the father was drunk.

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[67] May, Minding Children, Managing Men, p.312.

Accordingly, it should not be surprising that the smacking was done behind the 'starched and pleated weatherboard bungalows'.

Given the outward signs of similarity between neighbours – such as housing tenure, age groups, income and occupational status – it could be expected that neighbours would have been more intimate than they were. Yet none of the adult tenants interviewed socialised with their neighbours in their homes in this period. They knew their neighbours, helped out if needed and their children sometimes played together, but they maintained family privacy within their homes. This suggests that these people were aware that their lives may have had a vulnerable quality. Mrs W had said that she felt as if she was living in a glass house, and Mrs Y felt that her neighbours knew when she used the toilet. By keeping themselves reserved and at a polite distance from neighbours, privacy was maintained. Although the tenants said that socially and in terms of income they were 'all on a par' with their neighbours, privacy within the home was valued.[68] Tenants subscribed, in theory, to egalitarian ideas, but, in practice, they wanted sufficient privacy within their homes to be themselves. While they had no objection to the Plunket nurse coming into their house to scrutinise the babies, the house and the mother, they did they want the same scrutiny from their neighbours.

Families were more likely to socialise with their neighbours outside of their homes if suitable community facilities were available. For example, WS and DV both lived in Pine Hill in Dunedin and socialised at the local hall. Pine Hill is a suburb set high on the North Dunedin hills. Snow sometimes closes the steep access road in winter. For those without private transport, and with irregular public transport, the community was isolated from the city and its services. Both DV and WS remembered the local school and school hall,

[68] Mrs H.

which doubled as a community centre, as the focus of their social lives. Being an early state housing area, ideas of 'community planning' were incorporated the in suburb's overall plan.[69] The presence of a community hall and middle-income families, combined with the suburb's isolation may been factors in the community's focus on the hall as a venue for social activities. DV and WS remembered the hall as being used for dances, horticultural shows, meetings of Plunket Mothers, card evenings and variety shows. Other families, such as Mr and Mrs D and Mr and Mrs I, enjoyed social activities focused on their churches' communal activities. The experience of these families suggest that tenants, who could have otherwise maintained a distance from their neighbours, were likely to focus their social life around a compatible community facility. Suitable community facilities allowed tenants to make the choice to socialise with friends and neighbours outside of their homes and on their own terms, whereas the elimination of fences from the plans forced the idea of community on tenants.

Because the architecture of state houses strongly identified the houses as public property, the tenants' behaviour could, by extension, be accountable to the public. The tenants interviewed went to a great deal of trouble to present their houses and families in public to their best advantage. All indications are that the houses were spotless inside as well. From external appearances tenants might have appeared to be like their neighbours, in their private lives they asserted their individuality. This was maintained by resisting the intrusion of their neighbours. As long as neighbours were denied knowledge of the inside of the houses, they could not claim knowledge of the householder's personal imperfections. And conversely, as long as the outside appearances reflected commonly held standards,

[69] DV moved into their family's new Pine Hill house in 1938.

outsiders had no real knowledge that the householder was anything other than respectable.

Self-regulation to unspecified 'normal' behaviour may be looked at within the context of a post-structuralist analysis. The relationship between the state house occupants and the outside world may have been one where the tenant was subjected to pressure to 'normalise' their behaviour as a result of the disciplinary gaze of their neighbours and others. Foucault's ideas of the relationship between power and knowledge offer a means of understanding why state housing tenants valued the privacy of their homes as a means of denying knowledge to those subjecting them to surveillance.[70] Departmental files and oral histories indicate that not all tenants lived an exemplary life. Yet it is not clear if examples of neighbours who kept budgerigars in the kitchen cupboards, or those who did not mow their lawns, were resisting a disciplinary gaze in the Foucauldian sense. Resistance to the normalising pressures of the neighbourhood seems to have occurred in more subtle ways.

Tenants in this period were grateful to have their own homes. That they were rented state houses mattered little. They demonstrated proprietorship with signs that proclaimed the houses as private property by planting gardens and building fences. Post-war domesticity, described variously as emasculating, prescriptive and oppressive, appeared to be welcome to the men and the women interviewed. The men often worked two jobs to maintain the image of the husband as the breadwinner and the women went to great lengths to maintain a respectable-looking home. As Erik Olssen has pointed out, New Zealand's social welfare system is reflected in Plunket activities – in a values-system that uses measures to discipline and control

[70] Foucault, M, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, Penguin Books Limited, London, 1977.

those within its influence.[71] The children were all Plunket babies, and as such their mothers allowed themselves, their homes and the babies to be scrutinised by the often officious Plunket nurses. Most of the children received corporal punishment from their parents and both parents and children saw this as their right or their just deserts. State housing has been an aspect of New Zealand's welfare system. Peer and public surveillance into the private domain appear to have been in consciously resisted by the tenants, who placed physical and social barriers between themselves and the outside world as a means to preserve their privacy and hence their respectability.

During the years between 1937 and 1955 the tenants interviewed expressed satisfaction in their housing and environments. They thought that their material background was one where happy families had been successfully raised. They remembered their lives in similar terms to the images produced in the Housing Division's publicity material. This raises complex issues about the power of the mediated images to alter one's perception of self. The possibility does exist that those interviewed have at some time seen similar images of state houses and their tenants in movie theatres, Housing Division publicity and (at a later period) on television. They may have absorbed these images into their own memories as their own reality. Leaving this aside, however, tenants from this period reported living happy, hardworking and respectable lives. Tenants rejected the planners' ideas of community by erecting physical barriers between the space they considered was theirs and the space they considered to be public space, thus thwarting the idea of community space. Respectability was an important aspect of tenants' self

[71] Olssen, E., 'Truby King and the Plunket Society: an Analysis of a Prescriptive Ideology', in New Zealand Journal Of History, Volume 15, No.1, 1981.

image. This respectability was upheld vigorously, often at great personal cost to families. The private nature of the family home was maintained. Tenants socialised with friends and neighbours outside of the home. Those visitors allowed in were either children's friends or very close friends and relatives, when entertaining was conducted on a semi-formal basis. In this way tenants were able to control the amount of information an outsider had on them and more easily maintain a respectable front to the outside world.

The remembered experiences do not appear to have been those of tenants who were forced to modify their behaviour or thinking to an environment. Rather they suggest that the tenants were delighted to be living in an environment which had been created especially to accommodate them. The tenants interviewed did not modify their behaviour to encompass the planners' ideas of community, but set about modifying their environment to suit their own ideas. The tenants' ideas of private place, determined by traditional ideas, easily overrode the planners' ideas of community space.

Chapter 5

Changes: 1950 -1973

The changes in state housing between 1950 and 1973 occurred in a context of wider changes in New Zealand society. This chapter has two parts. The first part examines changes in housing policy as a whole and its consequences for state house tenants. The second part of the chapter looks at wider social changes that, directly and indirectly, influenced state housing and its tenants. In particular, ideas about the behaviour of women in the family, and that of young people in the community were identified as challenging society's structure. These social changes were not peculiar to state housing, but their effects appeared to be pronounced in state housing areas. As a result, state housing became associated with, and was seen as responsible for, the unwelcome changes in women's and adolescent's behavior in the minds of many observers.

Part 1: Housing Policy

The most significant feature of state housing policy in the years between 1950 and 1973 was the government's shift of emphasis from the promotion of public housing to the promotion of private house ownership, as a means to resolve the housing shortage. Applicants for state houses were means-tested and only applicants with lower incomes were allocated houses. The result of this policy was a drop in the numbers of families on the waiting lists, as middle-income families were no longer eligible for consideration as tenants. The lower incomes of new tenants affected the overall socio-

economic structure of state housing tenants. By 1973, housing areas, and by association their tenants, were being widely criticised.

Labour's housing priority had been to address the housing crisis through public housing. However, for many families, whether adequately housed or not, home ownership continued to be a popular aspiration. Restrictions and shortages associated with the war, were frustrating potential home owners. The economy was, apart from inflation worries, basically healthy. The social welfare measures, implemented by Labour, were now unchallenged by National. Therefore voters had few reservations that their (recent) security would be undermined. The National Party, aware of its constituents' home-ownership ambitions, spoke of freedoms for individuals. The wish to put the war and its restrictions in the past and move on to a peaceful and prosperous future appealed to voters who hoped that a conservative government would enable them to enjoy more material goods than previously. The Labour Government's thirteen year term in office ended in late 1949. The first National Government, led by Sydney Holland, won the election decisively. The National Government, once elected, promoted and financed home ownership to an increasingly wide section of the community.

The new National Government implemented changes in state housing policy. Its election campaign had highlighted discrepancies and contradictions in Labour's housing policy. Potential home builders were stymied. Building controls, a legacy of post-war shortages, frustrated the private building industry. Materials and labour had been prioritised for the state house building programme. Further it was alleged that state housing contained an 'elite state tenantry' who had good incomes, but were enjoying subsidised rentals at the public's expense, at the same time as the waiting list

for state housing continued to grow.[1] National's campaign raised the idea that this 'elite' should either buy their state houses and release funds for more state housing, or build, or buy, houses of their own, to make state houses available for those who needed them.

The National Party's campaign appealed to those wishing to establish themselves in their own home. It promised 'freedom from restrictions, regulations, bureaucracy and state interference'.[2] The National Government dominated the post-war period to the 1970s apart from a three year term when Labour was Government between 1957 and 1960. Labour was again re-elected in late 1972. In these years New Zealand experienced a long economic boom. As a result New Zealanders enjoyed a steadily rising standard of living.[3] Labour shortages and correspondingly high wages for men, linked with social welfare measures focused on supporting the family, meant that many families were able to purchase their homes with low cost mortgages borrowed through the state. Home ownership for families, in an increasingly wide range of income groups, was financed through the State Advances Corporation. In particular, the suburban bungalow was encouraged as the desirable location for families. In1971 the Housing Commission recommended that the government continue its support of home ownership, because:

> The desire for home ownership is deep rooted and, on the whole, surely a valuable human instinct. ...We believe that in New Zealand

[1] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.158.
[2] Chapman, 'From Labour to National', p. 356.
[3] 'New Zealanders continued to enjoy one of the highest living standards in the world, measured by any of the popular indicators, such as the number of automobiles or telephones per thousand people. The "real standard of living" was always among the top half dozen in lists of comparative standards.' Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, p. 288.

> the State should do all it reasonably can to cater for this natural aspiration.[4]

The idea that the desire for home ownership was a naturally occurring instinctive drive in New Zealanders seems to have been taken as self-evident. Home ownership was an outward expression of compliance with socially desirable attributes.

State housing Policy

Income Limits

In 1950 there were still 45,370 unsatisfied applicants for state houses.[5] Prior to its election the National Government had raised the issue of the continuing housing shortage as evidence of Labour's inability to deal with the problem through its emphasis on building state houses. In an effort to control demand for state houses the new National Government, in 1950, placed an upper income limit on applicants. The rationalisation given was that the government was attempting to target access to poorer families and those in greatest need. Applications fell to 32,698 in two years.[6] Superficially these figures indicated that fewer people were applying for state houses and that demand for such housing was dropping. However Gael Ferguson has pointed out that the income limit simply cut back the number of people on the waiting list. This gave the appearance that demand had dropped. In order to reduce these lists further, the State Advances Corporation culled those applicants who did not take the first house offered. The Corpoation re-assessed the needs of those applications graded

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[4] New Zealand Commission of Inquiry into Housing, Housing in New Zealand, 1971, p.35.

[5] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.177. The 'numbers' of applicants remains ambiguous. It is unknown if it refers to the number of applications or the actual number of individuals represented by the applications.

[6] Ibid, p.180.

as urgent in order to further reduce the lists. In spite of these measures the numbers of applicants graded as urgent remained static within a shrinking list overall.

Efforts to curtail the demand for state housing from low-income families were not initially successful. From 1950 demand for state housing continued although eligibility criteria meant that those who could show themselves in need were considerably poorer than in the immediate post-war period. Transit camps continued to provide temporary accommodation for homeless families. The six camps in Auckland provided accommodation for 250 families at any time for periods of up to a year. Residents at camps in other centres were reported to have similar waiting times for allocation to state housing. The transit camps had by the late 1950s become associated with low-income families waiting for state houses rather than middle-income families affected by the housing crisis.

In the period 1950-1973 much of the language used about tenants reflects ideas that state house tenants were failing to subscribe to those values associated with the home-ownership ethos endorsed in the new political climate. By 1960, the waiting list stood at 14,057, down from 45,370 in 1945. A 1960 press release from the Minister's office, stated that:

> The housing shortage, which has plagued New Zealand since the last war, is rapidly being overcome. ... it is one thing for a person to apply for a state house and another to be urgently in need of one. ...Reports held by the Corporation on individual applicants disclose that a substantial number of applicants can be considered to be well housed. ... It would be reasonable to assume that many would not be interested in obtaining state rental accommodation if it were not for the comparatively low rental scale on which these houses were let.[7]

[7] Bay of Plenty Times 16 August 1960, 'Press Clippings, Ministerial Policy', 1/4, Housing Division, National Archives.

The press release indicates that applicants for state housing were not in urgent need of housing, but were instead looking to take advantage of the reasonable rents charged for state housing. Moral judgements about applicants are implied in the statements. These suggest that applicants were abusing the state housing system. Those applying for state housing were doing so not because their housing need was urgent and could not be satisfied by other means, but because they were wanting cheap housing. The press release also noted that:

> Applicants for state houses are becoming more selective in their wishes regarding the type of accommodation they will accept. The Corporation deduces from this that the degree of urgency is not as acute as it was in the past.[8]

The idea that tenants were being choosy about their housing needs indicates that either the houses or the locations of the houses were not always satisfactory. The veiled outrage that the tenants could have the temerity to reject available housing also exposes the idea that state housing had begun to have associations with welfare and charity. As recipients of charity, tenants were expected to demonstrate their gratefulness by accepting their allotted housing unconditionally.

From the 1950s the income limit resulted in state houses being rented to people with lower and lower incomes: single women with children, widows and sickness beneficiaries, Maori and Pacific Islanders. The government continued to suppress demand for state housing by keeping the income limits low. Total applications fell to 7,251 in 1968.[9] In response to the decrease in applications, the Government was able to justify building fewer state houses and release more money into home finance. However the income limits for applicants had not been adjusted to inflation. In 1972,

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.198.

when the income limits were raised to take price and wage increases into consideration, the total number of applicants rose to 11,144.[10] The rise indicates that the need for low-cost housing, although much less than in the immediate post-war period, had not been resolved.

The effects of the income limits on applicants for state housing were not immediately felt in older established areas. In newer areas, the rapid creation of suburbs catering for low-income families was marked. These suburbs were frequently poorly serviced with amenities, as tenants' lack of discretionary income made them unattractive to potential retailers. The low incomes made community fundraising difficult, thus areas were slow to develop additional facilities. Because low-income young couples with children were prioritised for state housing, tenants and their families were at similar ages and stages of life. The limited age range of the tenants and their families resulted in uneven population cohorts, which placed uneven and often unsatisfied demands on limited community facilities.

State House Sales

By placing mechanisms to limit the demand for state housing, the government was able to slow down the building programme. Attention was turned to home ownership as a means to resolve the housing shortage. Existing state house tenants were given the right to buy their houses from 1950. The 'very liberal terms' offered by the State Advances Corporation did not prompt a burst of state house buying from the tenants. By 1955, after a slow start, 10,657 houses had been sold.[11] The young ages of the tenants and their children, and their secure fixed rentals may have acted to inhibit home-ownership aspirations in many cases. The slow initial response may also

[10] Ibid, p.198.
[11] Ibid, p.180.

indicate that only a small number of the tenants fell into the category of 'elite state tenantry' sufficiently well off not to need subsidised housing. In 1971 the Housing Commission noted that, of the 72,500 state houses built, only 21,500 had been sold.[12] Half of these had sold within the first five years of the policy change. As a proportion the numbers of houses sold to tenants was relatively low. After 1958 Family Benefit Capitalisation allowed some families to buy their state houses with no capital.[13] The slow rate of state house purchase by their tenants raises interesting issues. State houses, possibly because of their often undesirable locations, may not have appealed to tenants' aspirations of a 'dream home'. Further, the low rate suggests that home ownership may have been an idea which appealed more to those in the clutches of a rack-renting landlord, rather than those enjoying secure low-cost tenancy. The low figure somewhat challenges the idea that home ownership was a natural ambition of New Zealanders.

Mass housing suburbs

Because of the state housing programme's focus on allocating housing to families on criteria based on need and low-income, those families housed in the years after 1950 often became concentrated in large low-income state housing suburbs. This was especially apparent in South Auckland and the Hutt Valley. Industries were attracted to these locations because of their proximity to markets, labour, and transport. Proximity to markets was less a factor in accounting for the state housing in those rural areas, such as Kawerau and Tokanui. These towns needed labour for industries such as forestry. Maori migration to urban areas, which began in the war in response to labour shotages and the opening up of manufacturing and labouring jobs to Maori, increased rapidly after the war. From 1936, when 11.2% of Maori

[12] Housing in New Zealand, 1971, p.12.
[13] Ibid, p.11.

lived in urban areas, the proportion increased to the point where most Maori lived in towns and cities. In 1951, 7,621 Maori lived in Auckland.[14] A large proportion of these lived in the new state housing areas of South Auckland. Christchurch state housing areas were slow to experience Maori migration in appreciable numbers before 1960. The emigration of Pacific Islanders to New Zealand also increased in the immediate post-war period. Numbers increased to 26,271 in 1966 and to 61,354 in 1976. Pacific Islanders, in common with Maori, initially had difficulty accessing state housing.

In an effort to hasten both home-ownership and state house building, the National Government introduced the Group Building Scheme in 1953. Under this scheme builders agreed to construct houses to plans approved by the Housing Division in groups of six or more on land owned by builders. The government agreed to buy back those houses which remained unsold two months after completion at a pre-negotiated price. The houses bought by the state went into the state housing pool. Because the provision of sufficient suitable land for development was difficult for builders to do on their own, the Housing Division became involved in developing land for residential use. The Housing Division was able to use heavy machinery from the Ministry of Works for this purpose. By 1960, it was reported that earthworks totalling 5.5 million cubic yards had been undertaken in the previous two years to provide building sites.[15] Much of this work was

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[14] King, M., 'Between Two Worlds', in W.H. Oliver, and B. R. Williams, eds, The Oxford History of New Zealand, Oxford University Press, 1988, p.283.

[15] The Housing Division's own publicity material quotes that 420,000 cubic yards of earth had been moved up to 1959, in Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p. 201. The New Zealand Herald quotes a different figure and compares it with Wellington Airport, where 4 million cubic yards were shifted. This figure *seems* more accurate, New Zealand Herald, 30 June, 1960, 'Press Clippings, Ministry Policy', 1/4, Housing Division, National Archives.

performed in areas previously too steep for development. Nearly 20,000 houses were built under the Group Building Scheme.[16]

These houses, and those financed by State Advances Corporation, had to be built to plans approved by the Housing Division in order to qualify for the scheme's finance. Many builders used state house plans, or adaptations of these which differed in their details only. As a result the new urban landscape was monotonous. Peter Shaw has written that the use of these plans, in both private and state housing, meant that the State Advances Corporation's policies held the 'New Zealand suburban landscape in a kind of tyranny'.[17] Repeated use of roof pitches, stud heights and basic layouts, resulted in street scapes where houses differed only in square footage, additional features or a limited choice of approved cladding materials.

In 1971, the Housing Commission noted an upsurge in state rental applications. Concerns that state housing areas, such as Porirua and Manukau, had been the location of social problems prompted the Commission to recommend that the government would do better to cater for home-ownership aspirations, and ensure that the demand for state houses be kept as low as possible.[18] However the Commission had also been uncomplimentary about 'some new residential localities [which] produce a most depressing effect, prolonged exposure to which must be the reverse of beneficial to people who have to live there'.[19] Ironically the suburbs which met with the Commission's approval were the older middle-class suburbs of Kelburn, Ponsonby and Merivale, perhaps reflecting the tastes of the Commission's members.

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[16] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.185.
[17] Shaw, New Zealand Architecture, p.161.
[18] Housing in New Zealand, p.35.
[19] Ibid, p.111.

Allocation and the tenants

The most acute stage of the housing crisis was resolved by the late 1950s for most middle-income families. Ex-servicemen continued to be allocated 50 % of all state housing in the post-war period. Those families that continued to experience housing difficulties came from lower income groups than previously. That the demand for state housing came from these groups is attributable to several factors, quite apart from the fact that middle income families were deemed ineligible for allocation. The emphasis, in the years following 1950, on state-assisted home ownership, which had worked in favour of the moderate-income, smaller, nuclear family, excluded other families. Broadly, these families could be categorised as Maori, Pacific Islanders and other immigrants, and 'problem families'. This latter term was used by the State Advances Corporation to describe virtually all other families that deviated in some way from ideas of what constituted a 'normal' family. Perhaps the most important feature of the changes to tenants' composition was due to the increasing view that state housing was a corollary of New Zealand's social welfare system. The idea that low income families would have their housing costs subsidised by the state became entrenched in the state housing ethos. Welfare beneficiaries' low incomes made them eligible for state housing.

Housing Allocation Committees, the gatekeepers to state house tenancy, continued to exercise their discretionary powers. Little information appears to exist about the Committees' official guidelines for approving tenants. On one occasion the Hamilton office requested clarification of allocation policy. The reply read:

> We do not consider that any detailed written instructions or information on policy to Housing Allocation Committees is

> necessary. Most committees through experience have a fairly good grasp of the general policy.[20]

Committee members' appointments were based on their standing in the community and possibly their political affiliations. One such Committee member's credentials can be guessed at from a letter to the Minister for Housing. Mr Waddington, of the Gisborne Allocation Committee, responded to an invitation to meet with the Minister in Wellington. He apologised that his wife could not come as she had to attend their son's last day of seven years at Auckland's King's College boarding school. The actual invitation disclosed Mrs Waddington had not been invited to attend.[21] The choice of school chosen for their son indicates that Mr Waddington was probably Protestant, middle-class and financially well-off. Mr Waddington's values and socio-economic position were probably similar to other committee members. Allocation was determined on the basis of their value judgements.

When applicants applied for a state house, they were screened. If the hardship and need criteria were met, they were further screened for suitability as a tenant. Standards of suitability, or respectability, were judged by the values of committee members. Families that failed to pass scrutiny caused the Minister of Housing and the committees concern, especially when it was clear that their need for affordable housing was perhaps more urgent than those of respectable applicants. A series of meetings in 1957 discussed the question of 'problem families' and the view was expressed that:

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[20] 'Memo to Civilian and Combined Housing Allocation Committees', 35/83 pt2, State Advances Corporation, National Archives.

[21] 'Meeting at Parliament with Mr Fox Min. of SAC', 19 December, 1959, 35/83, State Advances Corporation, National Archives.

> The question of housing problem families is one of considerable difficulty. At the conception of the present State housing scheme, it was laid down that one of the points to be considered in the selection of tenants, was to be the general suitability of the applicant as a tenant. This necessarily meant excluding from consideration families, which from their way of living or the conduct of members, were likely to be unsatisfactory in the care of houses, or in meeting their rental obligations, or to be a serious cause of annoyance to neighbours.[22]

The 'problem families' definition itself was problematic. The harder the committee tried to define 'problem families' the more elusive and broad the definition became. Their attempts however, reveal that those in authority had fixed ideas on how 'normal' families should live in state housing. Whether or not state housing should be extended to 'problem families' brought considerable debate.

One definition of the problem from the Controller-General of Police classified three groups of 'problem families'. The first were Europeans, 'who have no personal ambitions and are prepared to reside in conditions which to the average citizen are appalling'. The second group were 'Maoris, who owing to primitive conditions under which they lived in remote Maori settlements are content to live in sub- standard houses' and Samoans, 'who are attracted to the houses occupied by groups 1 and 2'.[23] The lack of appreciation for the underlying poverty and prejudice from some landlords which governed the housing choices for the above groups was not considered. The focus of Police concern was that if 'problem families' were to be admitted into state housing, should they be grouped together in order to make their surveillance easier, or should they be evenly spread throughout the community in order for them to be exposed to improvement

[22] 'Problem Families', 24 June 1957, Acc 2060, 3/126, Housing Division, National Archives.

[23] 'Problem Families' Acc 2060, 3/126, Housing Division, National Archives.

by the example of their neighbours.[24] The consensus of opinion favoured 'pepper-potting'. This practice dispersed so called 'problem families' throughout the community, rather than housing them together. The motivation appears to have been out of concern for the children as it was felt that 'their reclamation, being a vital and important feature' would be hindered by concentration with other 'problem families'.[25] The rationale reflected ideas of environmental determinism; it was hoped that the presence of respectable neighbours would have an improving affect on problem tenants.

The committee was tempted to define all large families as 'problem families', but decided that they were only if they shared other characteristics. Those were: anti- social conduct, financial irresponsibility, an apathy of parents to their housing conditions, undue damage or lack of care of dwelling house, subnormal characteristics, or where there was a housing problem. That the definition became this broad indicates that it was tempting to view all large families as problematic in that their size challenged the neatly prescribed parameters set for state housing tenants. One representative commented that 'there was a tendency to confuse large families with problem families, or really problem parents'.[26] Parents, particularly mothers, were considered crucial in determining the respectable nature of the family. The Minister, William Fox, said that where the father was a problem but 'the mother was doing her best...was a matter which

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[24] These ideas were to dog the allocation committees again in the late 1960s when the presence of single mothers challenged state housing's role supporting the nuclear family.

[25] 'Housing of Problem Families Committee' 31 July, 1957, Acc, 2060, 3/126, Housing Division, National Archives.

[26] 'Conference of Problem Families Committee', 9 July, 1957, Acc 2060 3/126, Housing Division, National Archives.

exercised his mind greatly'.[27] Curiously, it seems that a woman with a poor type of husband had more chance of getting a state house, in Rotorua at least, than a deserted wife. A representative from Rotorua said that they had 'quite a number of these cases', but they were not allocated houses as they were 'likely to prove undesirable neighbours'.[28] The grounds on which deserted women were considered likely to be undesirable neighbours were not stated.

The problems faced by single women needing affordable housing was also discussed at the 1959 'Problem Families' meeting. Points raised reflect the committees' concerns. Dame Elizabeth Knox-Gilmer's concern was that lone women would not be able to meet state house rentals. She further warned against danger of 'undesirable types' of lone women acquiring such accommodation. The Auckland Allocation Committee was sympathetic to deserted wives, however the Minister felt that it was a good idea to insist on a legal separation from the deserted wife. Although unstated, the reason for this could have been that the deserted wife may still have had a husband and could have been attempting to hasten their access to a state house. A Christchurch representative thought that these female-headed 'problem families' could be placed in older state houses 'for a probationary period'.[29] Access to state housing had been difficult for female-headed families in the years before 1950. The income limits after that time, which had by default opened state housing to social welfare beneficiaries, meant that widows were more likely to get a state house than previously. Single, separated or divorced mothers, not sharing the respectable status of widowhood, continued to have difficulties accessing state housing. From the 1960s a

[27] 'Problem Families' 17 December, 1959, 35/83 pt2, State Advances Corporation, National Archives.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

combination of pressures – the acknowledgment that state housing had a social welfare role, the sinking income limits of applicants, and the weight of their numbers – enabled single women to qualify for state housing allocation. The file on 'Problem Families' was closed in 1959 with apparently nothing having been formally decided. It does seem that after the meetings on 'Problem Families', the Allocation Committees may have been obliged to reconsider applications from those families who failed to measure up to their idea of a desirable tenant.

Means testing of applicants was not restricted to income alone. Applicants' assets were also taken into consideration. In 1959, the question of whether or not a car could be counted as an economic asset in determining entitlement was discussed. It was decided that a car would not be counted as an asset if it was for work, or if it was an old car and the applicants had children.[30] The Christchurch Allocation Committee saw its role as encouraging home ownership if at all possible. Applicants whose assets other than a car were too great, were encouraged not to apply for a state house, but were encouraged to, instead, purchase homes. This discussion took place in 1959, during Labour's three year term. Allocation policy did not change significantly in Labour's term of office, but further confirmed the idea that state housing was for low-income families only. John A. Lee's proposition of a 'cross section of the people in every street, running from old-age pensioners to the working man with a family in six rooms with a garage', was scuttled initially because of the cost of the houses and the housing crisis.[31] It was abandoned completely by the second Labour

[30] Meeting at Parliament, 17 December 1959, 35/83 pt. 2, State Advances Corporation, National Archives.

[31] Lee, J., 'Progress in Housing', March 1937, p.18, Housing General, 3/1/8, Housing Division, National Archives.

Government, who saw its role as one of extending home ownership to an increasingly broad section of its electorate.

State housing had come to be seen as an aspect of New Zealand's social welfare system, and some felt that allocation should be reserved for needy New Zealanders. This idea prompted a question in the House concerning allegations that immigrants had received favourable access. The year the allegations were made, 1959, suggests that it was not British and Dutch immigrants who were causing the allocation committees' embarrassment, but probably Pacific Islander immigrants. Fox, in a meeting with Allocation Committee representatives, spoke against state housing being made available for non-assimilated or naturalised immigrants. Wellington Allocation Committees had practised a policy of demanding a residency period of four years before entitlement to a state house was made to immigrants. Allocation was then granted with reluctance on the part of the allocation committees. The meeting noted that the difficulty with housing Maori and Pacific Islanders was that, 'if one family moved in so did another'.[32] Little understanding was shown of cultural differences as they related to family relationships. The understanding was clear that those wishing to live in state housing should live in a manner which emulated Pakeha middle-class patterns, not with their extended whanau or 'aiga' in traditional patterns. Judging by the manner in which Maori and Pacific Islanders were specifically mentioned implied that those ethnic groups were not routinely able to access state housing. In 1967 an allegation that Pacific Islanders were getting state houses 'as soon as they set foot on New Zealand soil' was vigorously refuted by the Minister John Rae, in Parliament.[33]

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[32] 'Meeting at Parliament', 17 December, 1959, 35/83 pt 2, State Advances Corporation, National Archives.

[33] Christchurch Star, 2 September, 1967, Housing Division, Press Clippings, 1/4, Housing Division, National Archives.

Implied in the Minister's statement is the idea, felt strongly by some, that state housing should not be available for immigrants. As public property, state housing, its allocation procedures and tenants were subject to public scrutiny and criticism.

Subsidised rentals had quietly become entrenched by 1950 as both Labour, and later National, showed themselves reluctant to raise rentals on sitting tenants. As the rate of home ownership increased state housing became the refuge for those unlikely to ever participate in the 'dream' of home ownership. In practice, if not intentionally, governments administered a subsidised rent stock for low-income households by the late 1960s. The 1971 Housing Commission recommended that state house rents continue to be subsidised and provide a service analogous to social welfare.[34] The numbers of beneficiaries in state housing grew each year. The Auckland allocation committee chairman complained in 1973 that single mothers, who had never married, dominated the lists. He queried their entitlement to allocation, as he considered they were ousting ' the family that is trying to make a go of it'.[35] His complaint reveals that he did not consider a single mother could also have been 'trying to make a go of it'. Public resentment of single mothers, and those other beneficiaries eligible for state housing grew, as many people continued to believe that state housing was for middle-income workers, despite evidence that these families no longer needed or wanted state housing.

Home Ownership

[34] Housing in New Zealand, p.14.
[35] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.275.

Home ownership had been difficult to achieve in the immediate post-war period. Those wishing to build were frustrated by shortages of labour, materials and finance. Building controls, as a measure to ration materials, determined the allowable square footage of a family home. The National Government's election promises of freedoms, and an end to post war rationing and shortages, held a special meaning for those wishing to build their homes.[36] In the years after 1949 the government slowly withdrew from building state housing and instead turned its focus towards supporting home ownership. These measures were extremely popular. Home-ownership had become so widespread in New Zealand that it lead to the assumption that the desire for home ownership was a natural instinct.[37]

Between 1936 and the mid 1940s just over half of all building permits issued had been for privately-owned new houses. This rate increased to a point where, between 1960 and 1970, 90% of all building permits were for private new dwellings. The National Government, soon after its election in 1949, introduced suspensory loans of 10% of the cost of a house, with a ceiling of 2,000 pounds. The loan would be written off if the owners had lived continuously in the house for seven years.[38] In spite of the generous terms, numbers of privately-built homes had not increased sufficiently to satisfy the government. Complaints from builders that the total sums lent were too low, were countered by claims that houses were being extravagantly built, in spite of controls governing square footage. In 1953 the government called a conference to assess the building industry and housing requirements. The conference was critical of the government's failure to resolve the housing problem. The response to these criticisms was

[36] Chapman, 'From Labour to National', p.354.
[37] Housing in New Zealand, p.35.
[38] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.181.

the Group Building Scheme. Under this scheme the government, through the Housing Division supplied land for mass-housing schemes utilising Housing Division approved plans.

The motivation for National to extend home ownership to a wide range of people may be attributed to two factors. Firstly the government, aware that the housing shortage was still acute, realised that home ownership was an important aspiration for many families, and considered that the two problems would be best resolved by financing home buyers directly. The second motivation was found in the pressures created by the increased post-war birthrate. This meant that it was young couples most in need of housing who were prioritised for government assistance into home ownership.[39] Both these factors were contained within a wider political context where home-ownership aspirations were encouraged as a means to stimulate the economy. The National Government was politically indebted for its support from large and small business people, self-employed carpenters and allied tradespeople, who in turn had been attracted to National's commitment to promote their interests.

In an international context the influence of the Cold War and strong anti-communist sentiments caused a return of the language of the 1920s. Home ownership was seen as a powerful antidote for incipient communist sympathies, and as a means of fostering the values of thrift and independence encouraged by a conservative government. W.H. Oliver has noted that the government's housing policy offered seductive inducements to conservatism. Home ownership was promoted as a worthy goal in itself. The

[39] Sophie Watson has pointed out that the pattern of prioritising young couples for preferential access to housing has been common policy in both Britain and Australia. Pro-natalist politics have played a considerable role in this. Accommodating Inequality.

very act of buying a home was seen to create thrifty hardworking, responsible individuals who, with their stake in the country assured, would continue to demonstrate these moral virtues.

> The mortgagor lives under strong inducements to conformity - his interest payments have to be met, his equity is to be increased by periodic capital repayments, his investment is to be safeguarded. ... Few rebels have ever owned, by grace of the mortgagee, a suburban section; state and business co-operate to keep the home owner busy about his dream – the state generally speaking, enlisting the low income respectable with low interest rates, and the business catering for the more well-to-do. But both are enlisted in the same army, that of the stable and the respectable.[40]

The conservative National Government's commitment to support the interests of capital was allied with home-ownership aspirations as a means to create a large property-owning class. This property-owning class would, in theory, be most likely to support conservative capitalist policies. Many writers have supported the notion that the working class's move from the city to the suburbs, coincided with the process known as 'embourgeoisement', where working-class people acquired, or aspired to, middle-class consumption patterns and behaviour. This 'embourgoisement' carried a corresponding change of class identity and voting patterns. The rise of owner occupation and suburbanisation went hand-in-hand with the process where working-class people acquired middle-class behaviour. Politically, this was important, as home owners have tended to support conservative governments.[41]

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[40] Oliver, W.H., in Ian Wards, ed., Thirteen Facets: Esaays to Celebrate the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth the Second 1952-1977, Government Printer, Wellington, 1978, p. 48.

[41] Greig, A., The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of: Housing Provision in Australia 1945-1960, Melbourne University Press, Victoria,1995, p.98.

When the National government took office in 1949 international peace was again uncertain.[42] Fears that militant communists were intent on dominating the trade unions became an election issue. The anti-communist rhetoric of the international Cold War entered New Zealand politics. New Zealand took a position allying itself with the United States of America and Australia that was formalised in the 1951 Anzus Treaty. Both the New Zealand and Australian governments had supported state and private ownership of family housing as a means of regulating the economy and consumer demand for manufactured goods. The Australian government's housing policy may have been influenced by the international climate.

John Murphy has proposed that, from 1956, the Australian conservative government stepped down its support for state owned housing in an attempt to remove itself from the socialist associations of state housing and to strengthen its ideological alliance with the United States.[43] The withdrawal from government- controlled rental housing acted as a clear signal to the United States of Australia's commitment to that country's capitalist political position. The similar economic and political circumstances of New Zealand and Australia during this period offer the possibility that the state's withdrawal from public housing here was influenced by the international

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[42] Between the years 1950 and 1951, 5 million pound was paid into a War Emergency Fund. The New Zealand Economy: A Survey presented by the Rt. Hon. S.G. Holland, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. R.E.Owen, Government Printer, Wellington.1951, p.48.

[43] John Murphy's chapter on Cold War politics and housing examines how Australian conservative government policies were influenced by international events when the conservative Liberal Australian government stepped down its Commonwealth house building programme in favour of one promoting the private ownership of houses as part of a strategy which encouraded 'building a constituency for conservatism'. 'Social Policy and the Family', The Menzies Era: a Reappraisal of Government, Politics and Policy, Prasser,S., et al eds.Hale and Iremonger, NSW, 1995.

Cold War context. Murphy's analysis of the Australian conservative government's reaction to the Cold War concludes that this was the fundamental reason for that country's diminished interest in state housing. Although no direct evidence of New Zealand's withdrawal from state housing as a result of international politics can be found, the possibility remains that the intense anti-communist climate and the political alliance with the United States may have contributed in influencing the New Zealand government away from a socialist housing policy.

Alastair Greig underplays the idea that the state used housing as a means to influence the political climate through home ownership, but instead supports the idea that the increased home-ownership patterns in Australia, which were similar to New Zealand's, were a result of push and pull factors. These were a combination of: housing shortages, cheaper construction methods, high rents and generous lending rates. He does note however, that Australia's housing shortages placed pressure on the state to show that capitalism was an efficient means of solving these problems.[44] The Australian conservative government's challenge was to keep housing needs satisfied abreast of demand in order to appease those that may otherwise have considered that socialist options would meet their needs best. Both Australian governments and New Zealand's National and Labour governments of this period have used the idea of the family home as a vehicle through which a wide range of political ambitions could be promoted and met.

[44] Alastair Greig quotes D. Winston: 'Our western way of life is on trial in the world today, and one of the cracks in our armour is the squalour and inefficiency of our urban areas that are so largely housing areas.' The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of, p.45.

The challenge for governments attempting to satisfy the demand for housing has been to satisfy enough of the demand to curtail serious discontent, and to stimulate sufficient demand to maintain industries' output. One of the means the National Government attempted, was to satisfy more housing demands by shrinking each demand. F. H. M. Hanson, from the Ministry of Works, advocated reducing the size of the average house on the grounds that the government could not afford to raise the total amount lent to home builders. He pointed to the tradition of sitting rooms and unnecessary circulation space as wasteful, and promoted open plan designs as a means of reducing the external space without the loss of much interior space.[45] While the government was aware that the housing demand was still unsatisfied, the building industry was mindful of the benefits of satisfying home ownership aspirations to those with a limited budget. Newspapers and magazines were an important medium through which manufacturers promoted ideas about the family home and an array of goods and services which would contribute to the creation of an ideal dream home.

One series of books, based on articles that had appeared in the Weekly News, offers an indication of the ways in which business, the publishing and advertising industry were able to work together to encourage potential home-owners to build houses.[46] William Sullivan, the Minister for Housing, endorsed the first edition.

> I have felt for some time that independent home builders have suffered from lack of advice in the step they are about to undertake, and any effort to provide helpful information and thus promote home ownership is to be commended.[47]

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[45] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.188.

[46] Rosenfeld, M., The New Zealand House, Max Rosenfeld, New Zealand, 1954.

[47] Ibid, foreword.

The book is designed to boost interest in affordable home ownership by promoting the smaller home built with standardised materials. Emphasis is given to ways of cutting down on space. The idea of a minimally spaced floor plan was promoted. Rosenfeld attempted to make the point that home-owners could be just as happy with their compact houses as long as the benefit of this was a house that was easy to maintain.

> But all home builders, even the wealthy, prefer a compact house in which the sequence of rooms and the arrangement of fittings is laid out logically and coherently to obviate unnecessary servicing.[48]

The assumption was that there was a housewife 'servicing' the home. The author uses trade names for products, such as 'Cooper' louvre windows and 'Chester' prelaid parquetry, to establish a link between the advertisers, whose products are specified, and the designs.

> If you save 5ft of passage space you can have for the price of it a first-class electric sweeper, or a very good radio, or half the price of a refrigerator.[49]

However, the year of publication, 1954, and the emphasis on the need to reduce 'servicing' suggests that the author may have been aware that a second income was necessary to pay for these modest homes and their fittings. An easily maintained house was essential for the housewife if she was working outside the home as well. The series of books was often revised and updated. It was in its eleventh edition by 1969, indicating that it was filling a need among aspiring home builders, as Sullivan suggested.

The designs were specifically tailored to meet the requirements of the State Advances Corporations lending criteria. These were both rigid and conservative in their specifications. Because the Corporation had an interest

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[48] Ibid, p.9.
[49] Ibid, p.21.

in the buildings it financed, it was entitled to reject plans thought not to have a good resale value. It was difficult for home builders to obtain loans for all but the most conservative designs. In some cases architects drew two sets of plans; one for the actual house's design, and another that would qualify for the housing loan.[50] The Corporation advised against open plan living, exposed rafters, weatherboards and kitchens which opened into living areas. Peter Shaw describes the specifications as a 'battle against wood'.[51] Concrete, bricks, carpets and linoleums covered wooden framing and floors, and eventually aluminium windows replaced wooden windows. Suburbs rapidly filled with brick and tile, three and four-bedroom bungalows.

Labour during its 1957-1960 term did not attempt to revert to its policy of satisfying housing needs through state housing. Although the numbers of state houses built did increase during its term, home ownership continued to be encouraged and extended to yet lower incomes groups. The introduction of 3% concessionary loans for families earning less than 1,000 pounds a year further stimulated the building of low-cost houses. The introduction of Family Benefit Capitalisation, after 1958 prompted 9,342 applicants to apply for this advance; 6,308 of these were for building new houses.[52] In the eleven years prior to 1971, approximately 100,000 families were helped into buying homes.[53] Lending peaked in 1961, when 52% of all residential buildings completed were funded by the state.[54] Families with moderate incomes, who were able to take advantage of the State Advances Corporation's low interest rates and Family Benefit Capitalisation, purchased houses. The success of these lending policies was apparent in

[50] Shaw, New Zealand Architecture, p.61.
[51] Ibid, p.162.
[52] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.196.
[53] Housing in New Zealand, pp 55-56.
[54] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p. 198.

home-ownership statistics. During the1950s the proportion of New Zealanders living in houses that they owned, either outright, or with a mortgage, rose from 61 to 69%.[55] The purchase of a dream home became a reality for most male-headed Pakeha families.

Not all agreed that Family Benefit Capitalisation was desirable. The Society for Research on Women in a submission to the 1971 Housing Commission contended that the family benefit was designed to give the mother an income with which to help with the children's costs. Capitalisation of the benefit towards a family asset, ultimately more valuable to the parents than the children, was inconsistent with the benefit's concept. The Society also argued that a disproportionate emphasis was placed on the virtues of home ownership, through 'advertising extolling the merits of saving and getting rid of the landlord', excessive time-payments could be more a millstone than an anchor for the family.[56] The Commission dismissed these fears, because they considered that the government should continue to cater for New Zealander's 'natural' home-ownership aspirations. How much the desire for home ownership was a natural instinct or a social construct is difficult to measure. Considerable effort was expended promoting the family home as part of the dream of normal family life.

On the outer perimeters of towns and cities young couples with restricted budgets, built low-cost houses. An Auckland survey from 1974 examined the nature of the low-cost houses and suburbs and the housewives and the families who had lived in them.[57] It was hoped that the study might provide clues to the unexpressed values on which the built environment was based.

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[55] Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', p. 405.
[56] Housing in New Zealand, pp 34-35.
[57] Reynolds, M., and Bonny, S., Woman's World: Houses and Suburbs. The Society for Research on Women in New Zealand Inc, 1976.

All the families studied moved into new houses in the 1966-67 period. Most were financed through State Advances Corporation with the assistance of capitalising on the Family Benefit. The survey concluded that low-income families were directed towards low-cost housing, on cheaper land in the poorly serviced areas in the outer suburbs. These houses tended to suit their owners while the children were young, but became inadequate as the children grew and required more space to pursue their interests. General dissatisfaction was expressed at the 'bland lifeless' nature of the suburbs, especially when the housing was new.[58] The survey had been difficult to complete, as few of the houses were still owned by their original owners. This indicates that these owners may have expressed their dissatisfaction with their housing and environment by selling and moving elsewhere.

In 1960 William Fox, Minister for Housing, said: 'Never before has it been so easy for those families with limited resources, but with the will and desire to own their own homes, to achieve their objective'.[59] Fox was right in that it was relatively easy for a Pakeha married man with a family to own a home. However, his statement implied that those who did not do so lacked in 'will' or 'desire'. Privately-owned housing, albeit paid for with money loaned by the state, was found by many New Zealanders to be appealing. That so many working families bought into the property-owning classes, may be seen either as a denial of contemporary social values of 'fair shares' for all, or as a means of reinforcing the same idea.[60] By the end of this period, 1973, owning one's own house was seen as part and parcel of being a New Zealander. Few who were able to buy their own homes failed to do so. The National Government had accurately caught the mood of the 1950s when it

[58] Ibid, p. 56.
[59] New Zealand Herald 30 June, 1960, 'Press Clippings, Ministerial Policy' 1/4, Housing Division, National Archives.
[60] Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', p. 406.

made home-ownership a possibility for young families. Home-ownership became the norm to such an extent that those who rented their homes came to be seen as not complying with the home-ownership ethos. During this period state housing became increasingly associated with low-income Pakeha families, or those other marginalised families, unable to take advantage of the government's lending terms.

State house architecture, Town and Community Planning and the 1971 Housing Commission.

Whether privately-owned or state-owned, the single unit house, set in a quarter- acre section, had become the standard density for housing in New Zealand. Many pointed out that this ratio could not be sustained in the future. From the 1950s efforts to lower the costs of state housing resulted in new houses losing their English cottage look and taking on the 'simplified and scientific' appearance associated with modernism. The Government Architect, Gordon Wilson, designed 'demonstration' flats which were intended to offer an example to the building industry of the possibilities of low-cost houses. The Housing Division built 198 of these flats. They were not sold, as intended, because of lack of interest from potential buyers, and the flats became part of the state housing pool. The flats were criticised for their poor design and quality of construction. From 1957, low-rise multi-unit flats appeared. Surrounded by smaller sections, the flats represented the loss of the idea of the state house being of equal quality to the privately-owned single family house in its quarter-acre section. Whereas earlier multi-unit flats had been designed to appear as one larger house, these flats with their glass walls and flat roofs looked like modernist blocks of flats and bore little resemblance to the commonly held idea of a state house. The flats proved

difficult to let. Ferguson has suggested that it was these flats which led to the allegation that tenants were being 'too choosy'.[61]

The flats reflected the implementation of ideas based on the principles of modernism. However the pressure to reduce the costs of the flats resulted in functionalism taken to its extreme. For example, Cedric Firth, the architect who wrote promotional material for the Ministry of Works, built his own home along modernist principles, where the function determined the form. Firth's house features a flat roof, glass walls and is reminiscent of many state houses built from the mid-1950s.[62] The 'simplified and scientific' approach to architecture, which had appealed to architects on aesthetic grounds, appealed to the Housing Division for reasons of economy. The spare nature of the flats had little appeal to their tenants. Yet their easy maintenance was a factor that was to become increasingly important to women entering the work-force.

Because of the practice of building state and private houses at a rate of four or five to the acre, farm land, especially that close to cities, was being lost at a rate sufficient to cause concern among members of the Federated Farmers. The Governor General, Sir Bernard Ferguson, lent his support to the farmers' concerns. He was quoted saying, 'as a country man, it is agony to see so much first-class land being gobbled up so fast for urban purposes'.[63] The land referred to was often highly productive market gardening land. The National Government was pressured to alleviate farmers' concerns. Cutting down section sizes and building more densely was the logical way of

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[61] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.193.

[62] Bowron, G., 'Simplified and Scientific': The Firth House', in Wilson, J, ed., Zeal and Crusade: The Modern Movement in Wellington, Te Waihora Press, Wellington. 1996.

[63] Fruit and Produce, 15 June, 1965, 'Press Clippings, Ministerial Policy', 1/4, Housing Division, National Archives.

slowing down urban sprawl. This was easier to achieve in state developments rather than private developments. Consequently, new state housing after mid 1950s contained denser housing patterns. Multi-unit housing began to increase in the 1960s as a response to the dual pressures on the government to reduce state housing costs and the amount and cost of the land areas surrounding them. Porirua is an example of one such area where the newer houses of the 1960s were build in medium density patterns. The predominant form of the dwellings were two and three multi-units dwellings for families on smaller sections than previously.

Criticism of the design of state housing was muted in the years before 1950. The houses themselves had not received a great deal of criticism, other than generally expressed dissatisfaction as to their lack of variety, but the suburbs themselves were criticised for their absence of coordinated planning. Most of this focused on the set of ideas surrounding the concept of planned communities. From 1950, the National Government was clear on its position. Election promises of freedoms for individuals placed it ideologically in a position where ideas on community planning and individual freedoms were at odds. Schools and hospitals would be provided in state housing areas, but the development of community projects were left to the community to initiate.[64] State housing suburbs, with a population structure of young low-income families, had difficulties in establishing community facilities. The low-income families meant that the residents tended to form two age cohorts, that of the parents and or the cohort of their children. This created population bulges, which placed uneven pressure on the suburbs facilities and services. Busy, cash-strapped young parents were not generally in a position to organise and fundraise for additional facilities. The moral panic expressed in the wake of allegations of juvenile

[64] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.146.

delinquency in the Hutt Valley, raised awareness of the lack of recreational facilitates there.

The Hutt Valley became the site of real or imagined concerns over the behaviour of young people. In 1954 the Mazengarb Report was published.[65] The issues that led to the report's publication were allegations that teenage children from a state housing area were behaving in a delinquent manner. The Report has, in time, been dismissed as 'impotent Victorianism', largely because the evidence before the committee had little substance. The Report's recommendations reflected a narrow, moral righteousness on the part of its committee members and many of those who submitted evidence.[66] However, the findings of the report are valuable in that they offer an example of the tone taken by authority figures towards apparent manifestations of social disorder. In particular, many of these attitudes were directed at perceived shortcomings of state housing and its lack of community spirit. The report raised several issues relevant to the social aspects of state housing, a factor which was considered to be important in the scandal. Among other aspects, which will be discussed later, the Mazengarb Report found that state housing areas were both lacking in community facilities and 'community spirit'. The latter was demonstrated in the lack of 'group willingness to improve their conditions as is seen in older communities'.[67] The Report did not suggest or recommend initiatives to implement the funding of facilities to improve the community's recreational facilities, but focused instead on recommending that the problem be resolved through increased vigilance of

[65] Mazengarb, O., The New Zealand Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents, Government Printer,Wellington. 1954.
[66] Glazebrook, S.G.M., 'Mazengarb Report, 1954: Impotent Victorianism', Unpublished Thesis, University of Auckland, 1978.
[67] Mazengarb, Report on Moral Delinquency, pp 28-30.

the family. The Report did however suggest that juvenile delinquency could be reduced if 'in future State houses were not erected in extensive blocks'.[68]

It was feared that concentrations of poor people in areas could lead to the break down of a community, providing a threat to the stability of society as a whole. The most frequent argument, used to address these concerns, was expressed in the idea of an improved 'social mix' of residents.[69] This idea was based on environmental planning. In this instance, it was thought that a community structure could be altered for the better if the community contained a 'balanced' variety of ethnic, income and age groups. The assumption was that a superior class would emerge. Being superior, they would provide the initiatives for improving a community's social life, by organising group fundraising for community ventures, and providing models of behaviour for the lower social classes. Within state housing allocation policy these ideas became expressed in the term 'pepperpotting'. Groups of people, thought to be more at risk of manifesting signs of social deviance, were peppered throughout state housing areas rather than grouped in concentrations. 'Problem families' with criminal records, single mothers, Maori and Pacific Islanders were 'pepperpotted' into state housing during the 1960s in the hope that their neighbours would model appropriate behaviour for them to emulate.

Concerned observers in the 1960s had suggested that low-income suburbs, in particular, were causing a 'social pathology' among the residents. A new medical condition, 'suburban neurosis' or 'new town blues', was discovered. This condition was seen to have particularly affect women in the suburbs with 'nothing to do' other than servicing the household. Because many of the

[68] Ibid, p.30.
[69] Ferguson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p. 204.

new suburbs were isolated and poorly serviced, many women found them dull places in which to live.

Report of the Housing Commission

In 1971 a comprehensive housing report was published. The Housing Commission was directed to inquire into, and report on, the present condition and the future needs for housing, with the 'objective of preserving and developing a high quality of social and cultural life within an attractive physical environment'.[70] Numerous submissions, from an 'imposing list of organisations and persons' interested in state housing, were received.[71] Of particular concern were the areas of vast state housing at Porirua, north of Wellington, and two suburbs in south Auckland, Otara and Mangere. The commission acknowledged that these houses had been built out of a need to build houses quickly and economically, but the issue was how to reconcile the short term dictates of economy to the long term objectives of the Commission. It was noted that the discontent expressed did not come directly from those people living in the areas in question, but that when the residents of Porirua had been surveyed in 1966, they did reveal substantial degrees of dissatisfaction in their environment. The Commission felt the lack of community leadership and mutual organisation had been a factor in the residents not expressing their dissatisfaction. The following factors were identified as sources of discontent within state housing areas:

1. The areas were criticised as being chiefly devoted to low cost housing with little variation in either style or appearance. Although over 40% of Otara houses were built by Group Building Schemes, these differed little in appearance from state houses. Built in the 12 years prior to the publication of the report, housing in some parts was already showing

[70] Housing in New Zealand, 1971, pp 15-16.
[71] Ibid, pp 16-17.

signs of incipient slums. The Commission recommended that the proposed new housing scheme at Albany should not proceed, unless its community was planned in accordance with a national housing authority's approval.

2. The Commission noted that 'problem' state housing areas lacked facilities such as halls, reserves, libraries, recreational facilities and attributed this to the fact that the communities had been established quickly. The residents, being entirely low income families, were ill-equipped to fundraise. The Commission recommended the government could consider meeting, or exceeding, a 50% subsidy on funds raised for community projects in these areas.
3. The areas contained a population that was predominantly young married couples with, therefore, a high proportion of young children. Yet there were few pre-school facilities for children for either education or child care. The Commission declined to comment further, as it was aware that the Education Department was currently considering pre-school education.
4. The commission pointed to the limitations of the State Housing Act, which focused on actual housing and ancillary services. This narrow focus did not allow for the planning and development of comprehensive communities.
5. Many areas lacked adequate and convenient shopping facilities. This, combined with the lack of public and private transport services, created difficulties for tenants. The use of mobile shops was not an adequate substitute.
6. Employment opportunities were restricted in many areas. The Commission pointed out that some residents of Porirua travelled three hours each day to and from work in the Hutt Valley. It was acknowledged that family incomes were supplemented by an extra

part-time job or by the wife working. Little was done by government to encourage the development of industry. The Commission noted the irony of industries in the Hutt Valley being so short of labour that they ran buses daily to Porirua for staff. The failure to plan industry and housing together had resulted in this situation.

7. The income bar limited the allocation of state houses to those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale. Within this group there were large numbers of Maori and Pacific Islanders. Otara had a population of which more than 40% was Polynesian. The Commission felt that care would have to be taken to 'ensure that concentrations of this size are exceptional, if the policy of integration is to be preserved'.[72]

The commission drew the conclusion that the key causes of concern were the results of poor planning which had resulted in a lack of a balanced community social mix. Comparing information from the United Kingdom and Australia's public housing, it was considered that the idea of a fully-balanced community was probably an illusion, but that a better balance could be achieved with the inclusion of a variety of industries and facilities. The Commission considered that a degree of monotony was inevitable in any sizeable low-cost housing estate, however more attractive designs and layouts were possible.[73] Although it was noted that the design and quality of the housing and its environments were not conducive to 'developing a high quality of social and cultural life within an attractive physical environment', the idea was still expressed that much of the blame for the suburbs lay with the fact that residents were not the correct social mix.

[72] Ibid, pp 18-21.
[73] Ibid, p. 25.

The persistent idea remained that if the right people could be mixed together, a desirable community would be the inevitable result, regardless of the physical surroundings. These ideas reflect the antithesis of the ideas contained within environmental determinism which had sought to create a community by first providing an environment conducive to a community's development. Although the Commission had given the question of state housing problems careful scrutiny, its recommendations were somewhat *laissez faire.* The most important result of the Commission's report was the introduction of smaller cluster housing schemes in the 1970s, again an attempt at creating communities.

Maori in state housing and the Hunn Report

In 1952, Whina Cooper and the newly established Maori Women's Welfare League had surveyed Maori housing conditions in Auckland. The survey found Maori families living in overcrowded and sub-standard conditions.[74] The results of the survey contributed to the need for the 1957-60 Labour Government to report on, and the National Government to implement, a Maori urban housing policy.

Jack Hunn was appointed Acting Secretary to the Department of Maori Affairs and given the task, by Walter Nash, to 'arrive at an "accounting" of Maori assets and find a way of using them for the good of Maori people as a whole'.[75] His report was published in 1961 by the National Government and was the subject of much discussion. Hunn identified three groups of Maori. The first: 'a completely detribalised minority whose Maoritanga is only vestigial'; then 'a main body of Maoris, pretty much at home in either

[74] Coney, S., Standing in the Sunshine: A History of New Zealand Women since they won the Vote Penguin Books, New Zealand, 1993, p.85.

[75] Hunn, J.K., Report on the Department of Maori Affairs, R.E. Owen, Government Printer, Wellington, 1961, p.12.

society who like to partake of both'; and a final category of a 'minority complacently living a backward life in primitive conditions.'[76] Integration of Maori, as exemplified by the first group, was the desired goal, but the second group was also acceptable. The report had the effect of making integration of Maori the policy of the National Government, and hence the idea of 'pepperpotting' Maori in state housing areas.[77] Whereas, prior to 1960, the Labour Government had sidestepped the issue of urban Maori families' housing needs, the National Government increased funding through both Maori Affairs and the State Advances Corporation. From 1962 the State Advances Corporation was called on to assist the Department of Maori Affairs in matters of Maori housing, especially in urban areas. Young Maori families, removed from their rural extended families found that 'pepperpotting' brought its stresses. Although state housing was adequate compared with the inner-city housing conditions many had faced in the past, the policy of integration removed the proximity of the extended family, who could not be easily called on for support in difficult times.

A programme to build houses to be sold to Maori families began in 1962. Houses were to be 'sited in relation to other housing in such a way as to implement as far as possible the policy of integration of Maori families into the community as a whole'.[78] Home ownership was not always as easy for Maori families as it could be for Pakeha families. Maori were often disadvantaged in the labour market and often employed in casual labouring and semi-skilled jobs, in seasonal employment such as meat processing or other processing work. In 1961 incomes for Maori men averaged 10% less

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[76] Hunn, Report of Maori Affairs, p.16.
[77] Butterworth and Young, Maori Affairs, pp100-103.
[78] Trlin, (quoting from the Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives.1962 H.28, p.15) p.111.

than that of Pakeha. This gap continued to widen.[79] Lower wages, combined with higher Maori fertility rates than those of Pakeha, meant that less money had to stretch further among the larger families.[80] Policies of integration had succeeded in making low income Maori families conspicuous in state housing.

Exit and Voice

The Housing Commission had noted that, although dissatisfaction with state housing had not been directly expressed by the tenants to the Commission, a university survey had revealed considerable discontent. Neither the State Advances Corporation nor the Housing Division did not appear to have kept complaints from tenants in their archives. This implies that there may not have been mechanisms in place to address tenants' complaints, beyond those relating to maintenance matters. Valerie Karn and others have used Hirschman's 'exit and voice' model, and applied it to public housing in Britain. Briefly, tenants exercise the exit option when quitting tenancy for reasons of dissatisfaction.[81] The voice option is used when tenants feel that expressions of dissatisfaction are heard and acted on by someone in a position to listen to, and address, the complaint. Hirschman names a third factor in describing customer response to unsatisfactory services, that of loyalty.[82] Accordingly, customers' exit or voice response will be determined by whether or not they feel a sense of loyalty to the institution. Loyalty may

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[79] Sorrenson, M. P. K.,'Modern Maori: The Young Maori Party to Mana Motuhake', in Sinclair, K, ed., The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand, Oxford University Press, Auckland,1996, p.345.

[80] Ibid, p.345.

[81] 'Exit' and 'voice' are the terms used by Albert Hirschman in 1970 to describe the concept of the control customers can use over the services they receive. Karn, V., et al, Tenants' Complaints and the Reform of Housing Management, Dartmouth Publishing Company, England, 1997, pp11-15.

[82] Karn, Tenants' Complaints, pp11-15.

be influenced by feelings of personal gratitude for past help, or by political beliefs.

It has been proposed that the exit option is that most often identified with the operations of the private market, with its emphasis on competition for customers. Here, customers act on their dissatisfaction by turning to an alternative product or service. In this sense the post-1950 government's focus on the provision of homes can be seen as a business model, where the customer is offered an alternative form of housing. Dissatisfied tenants could take the exit option, assuming the cost of renting or buying were more or less comparative. In the years prior to 1971, 4,000 the existing stock of over 50,000 state houses were vacated each year.[83] Certainly some of these exits would have been due to death or work transfers. The prospect of an alternative landlord has not always been feasible in New Zealand as state rentals in this period were usually lower than private rentals. It appears that tenants who did not use their exit option may have been frustrated in having their voice option heard. Those tenants dissatisfied with their housing, whose voice was not heard or acted on, held an unenviable position.

Given these circumstances, the exit and voice model offers an explanation for the deterioration of much state housing in the years after 1950. Tenants may have expressed their resentment of the state as a landlord in the direction of its property. Failure to care for the property, and to even abuse it, was a means by which the tenants could make their feelings towards the landlord apparent. What is clear is that state housing as a whole began to deteriorate in the latter part of this period. For reasons that are not altogether clear, the tenants became seen as those responsible for this. However the changes in state housing families were not peculir to state housing but rather

[83] Housing in New Zealand, p.13.

a concentrated reflection of changes that been occurring in a wider family context.

Part 2: Social Change.

In many respects the physical appearance of a typical state housing suburb had changed little since it was first built. What had changed was its residents. The second part of this chapter examines significant changes in New Zealand society that would affect and become associated with state housing and its tenant families. The two most important of these changes were firstly, those that affected, or were initiated by the post-war children; and secondly, those that affected, or were initiated by women. These changes were not necessarily the result of, or tied to, government policy. Nor were they peculiar to state house tenancy. However many social changes during these years impacted on tenants, through the attitudes of many observers who saw state house tenancy as the cause and breeding ground of unwelcome social changes.

Children, Teenagers

As has been discussed in chapter two, most children in New Zealand were 'Plunket babies'; their mothers to a greater or lesser extent raised their children according to Plunket's rigid schedules, which theoretically should have resulted in disciplined and controlled children. Yet the events in the Hutt Valley had prompted a flurry of moral outrage directed at parents, especially mothers, whose ability to control their children was questioned. The Social Welfare Minister, Dame Hilda Ross, declared, 'Laxity, terrible laxity, has produced the scandal which is before us now'.[84]

Although the Mazengarb committee had difficulties in establishing grounds for its investigations, given that official figures showed no change in reported cases of delinquency, it did decide that youth were demonstrating a 'new pattern' of behaviour, and noted a change in teenagers' 'mental attitude'.[85] These new patterns were disapproved of by the respectable members of society. An older generation's values, shaped as they were by the events of world wars and economic depression, were not those of the younger generation growing up in a period of peace and affluence. The Mazengarb Report's findings recommended a return to the values of the preceding generation. The Report recommended, and this was passed into law, that children under sixteen should not be able to access birth control. This was to have serious implications for young women.

The changes in adolescent behaviour may be seen in a demographic, social and economic context. New suburbs such as those in the Hutt Valley teemed with children. It was found that 42 % of the population was under 25 years

[84] Coney, Standing in the Sunshine, p.174.
[85] Mazengarb, Report on Moral Delinquency, pp14-18.

old. The Mazengarb Report's alleged offenders were not 'baby boomers', being too young to qualify for this title, but the offspring of the young couples given priority access to state housing in the housing crisis of the 1930s and 1940s.[86] The arrival of the 'baby boomers' in the years after 1946 helped create more suburbs with a disproportionately high youth population. Pro-natalist policies had been effective; fertility increased to 3.6 children per adult woman in 1947 and 4.3 in 1961.[87] The children created large and uneven demands on health and educational facilities. The lack of social and recreational facilities made these children a highly visible presence in neighbourhood streets.

Although social patterns changed, attitudes were slower to change. Victorian morality remained in force with much of the older generation. A.E. Manning's study of so called 'deviant' teenagers, The Bodgie: A study in Psychological Abnormality, offers an insight into the moral climate of the 1950s.

> The most important single factor in the whole problem is the mother round whom the home should revolve and must be made to revolve. Her attitude to her child during the first five or six years of its life ...will be the most important influence of all in whether her child grows up to be a normal, happy, healthy person or an unhappy maladjusted social problem.[88]

The inference was clear: mothers were held responsible for abnormal, poorly adjusted children. Manning arrived at this conclusion in spite of the evidence given by the 'bodgies and widgies' in his study. The 'bodgies and widgies' felt let down by their fathers who did not take any interest in their affairs. The fathers' pretence to be too tired 'didn't wash' with the teenagers

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[86] New Zealand Now - Baby Boomers, Department of Statistics, 1995.

[87] The New Zealand Official 1990 Yearbook, Department of Statistics, 1990, pp 137-8.

[88] Manning, A. E., The Bodgie: A Study in Psychological Abnormality, A.H. and A.W., Reed, Wellington. 1958, pp 89-90.

studied as they knew that their mothers worked harder than their fathers.[89] Manning also thought it significant that the 'bodgies and widgies' in the group he studied had each had repeated and severe beatings from their parents, and deduced from this that external disciplines were not affective behavioural controls.[90] David Ausubel was also shocked by the level of discipline demonstrated in high schools he visited and wrote at some length about their 'unnecessarily authoritarian and repressive' nature.[91] His comments on corporal punishment indicate that it was a well-used method of discipline both in the home and at school. He noted that mothers were more 'coldly impersonal and matter-of-fact and less spontaneous and relaxed', presumably in comparison with American mothers. Ausubel wrote that one of the mothers' greatest fears was of spoiling the baby and in order to redress that possibility, infants were slapped at an age when they could not appreciate the nature of their offence.[92]

It is difficult to know how far these criticisms were echoed by educated people. Ritchie and Ritchie had, in their 1970 study of child-care, agreed that New Zealand parents were authoritarian in matters of their children's

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[89] Ibid, p.67.

[90] Ibid, p.70.

[91] The book provides an example of how gender exclusive writing can twist the text to mean other than what the author means. Ausabel uses universal male pronouns to cover both men and women, or in this case girls and boys. When he discusses corporal punishment in schools, he fails to mention that he is referring to boys' schools and emphasises how draconian they were in the 1960s. But in an earlier footnote he writes 'The repressive and authoritarian discipline of girls' boarding schools is legendary. ...Boys' schools are lax by comparison.' He conveys the impression that girls were routinely caned, and subjected to military drilling even more severely than boys. Ausubel, D., The Fern and the Tiki: An American View of the New Zealand National Character, Social Attitudes, and Race Relations, The Christopher Publishing House, Massachusetts. First published 1960, 1977.

[92] Ibid, p.88.

discipline.[93] Child-care practices were changing. The rigid schedules of Plunket had softened somewhat to accommodate a more relaxed attitude to parenting and preschool education. The new ideas about 'demand feeding' and the 'play way', examples of Dame Hilda Ross's 'terrible laxity', replaced older disciplinary methods of child-care. Many of the older generation still felt, however, that the old ways were the best.

Young Adults

Young adults in the work-force were relatively well paid, giving them the means, if not the facilities, to finance their own leisure-time pursuits. Young people, exposed to social influences from their peers rather than those of their parents, became the generation to discover sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, not always in that order, to the disapproval of their elders. Popular culture – comics, music, dances, movies in the 1950s, and later television – was blamed for having a disturbing influence on young people. Leisure-time pursuits were criticised largely because they were not in the form approved of by community leaders.

Regardless or in spite of the admonitions of their elders, young adults had the means to buy alcohol, which was the preferred drug of the 1950s and 1960s. David Ausubel was appalled at the behaviour of those who drank and indulged in 'brawling, drunken cavorting, the use of obscene behaviour in mixed company, indecent propositioning, and the smashing of windows and furniture'. Ausubel considered much of the excessive drinking 'a desperate way of escaping from the oppressive boredom and emptiness of social life.'[94] Ausubel's comments appear to be directed at the evidence of public

[93] Ritchie, J., and Ritchie, J., Child Rearing Patterns In New Zealand, A. H. and A. W. Reed Ltd, New Zealand. 1970.

[94] Ausubel, The Fern and the Tiki, p.52.

drinking. The six o'clock closing of public bars, which remained in force until 1967, had directed the after-hours drunkenness on to the streets. Alcohol consumption patterns climbed steadily to peak between the years 1970 and1985.[95] The large neighbourhood taverns, a feature of many suburbs, did not appear on the suburban landscape until the mid 1960s. Ironically, the public bar had always been a male preserve, until such time as it moved to the suburbs and became a tavern. Women were more likely to socialise in the suburban tavern bars than they had been in the public bars of the city.

Because there were more young women and teenage girls in the population during the 1960s, the problem of ex-nuptial pregnancies was more common. Throughout the 1960s ex-nuptial births rose from 5000 in 1961 to nearly 7000 in 1970.[96] This sharp rise coincided with the post-war children's sexual maturity. In 1967, 27% of first babies born to women in the age group 16 to 25 were unmarried women. A further 40% of all first babies were born within the first eight months of marriage.[97] Adoption, the standard solution, was not always a viable option. By the end of the 1960s the supply of babies outstripped prospective adoptive parents. From 1968, unmarried mothers were eligible for the Emergency Benefit. Mothers who chose to keep their babies in spite of the otherwise difficult circumstances, were able to access state housing, although this did cause difficulties because of policy supporting the nuclear family.

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[95] The New Zealand Official 1990 Yearbook, p.233.
[96] Else, A., A Question of Adoption, Bridget Williams Books, 1991, p.xii.
[97] Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, p.300.

Women, work and the nuclear family

The Mazengarb Report had condemned the excessive materialism of women who left the house to work, but it appeared that many women found joining the work-force rewarding for other reasons. It was noted that some women 'prefer the company at an office, shop, or factory to the routine of domestic duties'.[98] Hutt Valley's high school principal gave evidence to the inquiry that, of 313 third formers, 73 did not live in 'normal' homes, defined as those of 'just the ordinary mother and father – the father worked and the mother stayed home.'[99] The principal's language exposes the view taken of those women who failed to live within narrow prescribed behaviour patterns for women. The proportion of mothers of Hutt Valley high school children working was higher at 24%, than the national average at about that time. In 1956, between 11.3% and 17.5% of all married women worked outside the home.[100] The Hutt Valley women's apparently high work-force participation may been attributed to the possible causes the Report had suggested, such as: economic necessity, excessive materialism or boredom with domestic duties. The increased appearance of women in the work-force from the 1950s was often criticised as it appeared to threaten conservative ideas of what constituted the 'normal' nuclear family.

Feminist analysis has argued that, women's post-war suburban domesticity was evidence of patriarchy.[101] The suburb, which had physically separated

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[98] Mazengarb, Report on Moral Delinquency, p.35.

[99] Coney quoting from the Special Committee on Moral Delinquency, the findings of which made up the Mazengarb Report. Standing in the Sunshine, p.174.

[100] Dunstall, ' The Social Pattern', Table 10, p. 419.

[101] Daphne Spain's studies have shown that women's status is lowest in societies in which housing is sexually segregated. Spain uses the

women from the city, the site of paid work, made women economically dependent on their husbands. Certainly factors such as poor child-care, transport services and low wages, can be used as evidence that women were discouraged from paid employment, but the implication that women were unhappy prisoners performing forced labour is unsustainable. Helen May has found evidence otherwise. May has pointed out that although women in New Zealand were going out of the home to work in increasing numbers, the focus of this work was the pursuit of the ideal home.[102] Women did two jobs, one paid and the other unpaid, in order to present the ideal image of the ideal 'normal' family which, by the Hutt Valley high school principal's definition, contained only a father in paid work. David Ausubel's contemporary observation tends to confirm this. He noted, in 1960, that labour- saving 'gadgets' had little effect in releasing New Zealand women from 'household drudgery', since the women tended to re-invest the time saved in other projects in the home.[103] From the 1950s it does not necessarily appear that women went out to work as an expression of resistance to their domestic role but rather in order to reinforce it. The high rate of women's fertility, at 4.3 children per woman in 1961, further suggests that many women enjoyed their domestic and parenting roles.

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argument of Middle Eastern countries where housing itself is segregated, but implies that the sexual segregation of women in suburbs as a similar example of gender segregation and status. The segregation of the home as place of unpaid work for women and the city as the source of paid work for men, implicit in the design of state housing, does tend to reinforce Spain's hypothesis in an economic sense. Whether it is a contradiction or confirmation of this idea, women who left the suburban home to work were subjected to a great deal of criticism. Gendered Spaces, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1992.

[102] May, Minding Children, Managing Men, p. 112.

[103] Ausubel, The Fern and the Tiki, pp 78-9.

Married women re-entering the work-force changed the ideal of the nuclear family. The wife had some degree of economic independence as the husband was no longer the sole breadwinner. In many families this caused stress. The emergence of the feminist movement, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, challenged gender roles and most especially the power structures within the family. Some women refused to accept domestic violence as an aspect of their lives. Others regretted young marriages, often precipitated by pregnancy. Divorce figures, which had risen slowly throughout the century, reached 11% in 1973.[104] Divorced, separated and single mothers, whose incomes were low, and had no other home, were able to access state housing, and did so in increasing numbers from this time on. Because of the traditional associations between the ideology of state housing and child welfare these women were able to access state housing at reasonable rents. However, many of the beneficiaries in the late 1960s experienced difficulties paying their rent. Rental arrears, owed to the State Advances Corporation reflected this. Arrears increased from $190,085 in 1968 to $275,669 in 1969. This was attributed to a number of causes; one of these was the increased number of tenants who were 'solo parents, very young parents, [or had] unstable employment records and matrimonial difficulties'. It was noted by the State Advances Corporation that it was new tenants who were among those experiencing the most difficulties meeting their rental obligations.[105] The third Labour Government, elected in 1972, introduced the Domestic Purposes Benefit. This welfare measure was designed to support the parents and children

[104] Palmer, G., 'Birth Mothers: Adoption in New Zealand and the Social Control of Women 1881-1985', Unpublished thesis, University of Canterbury, 1991, p.37.

[105] Christchurch Press, 16 July, 1969, 'Press Clippings, Ministerial Policy', 1/4/12, pt2, Housing Division, National Archives.

without a partner and recognised all single care-givers as that, whether they were married, widowed or divorced. It was mothers rather than the fathers who predominantly became the beneficiaries. The Domestic Purposes Benefit gave women the opportunity many had needed to leave their marriages without the additional stress of finding employment and child-care.

The ideological links between state housing and welfare, as a means to support the nuclear family, were strained by the influx of non nuclear families. State housing in this context could not support and reward the deserving nuclear family *and* the 'undeserving' single mother. The hierarchical structure identified by Margaret Tennant, which depicted mothers as more or less deserving according to their marital status, was officially obliterated, although the long-standing moral distinctions remained.[106]

Some members of the public had long taken an interest in the moral standing of state house tenants. In 1973, a state house tenant circulated a petition asking the government to pay half the cost of safe, child-proof fences to help prevent another accident, such as the one that had occurred in the previous week. A small girl had escaped the front yard of her state house and been killed by a car.[107] The letters to the editor, in response to this news item, revealed some of the public's feeling towards state house tenants.

> It astounds me ... to read that there is a petition seeking government help to build different fences around the houses provided by the state at such competitive rentals. Surely we have ample means at our disposal to limit our families so that we may

[106] Tennant, M., Paupers and Providers, Allen and Unwin, 1989, p.105.
[107] The Press, 26 January, 1973, 'Press Clippings, Ministerial Policy', 1/4, Housing Division, National Archives.

> provide adequately for their care and well being instead of expecting the state to do this. Yours etc, "Just a Taxpayer"[108]
>
> I too am astounded at the number of children in one street – five houses and five children in each. Whilst I agree that the fences are inadequate, the state is doing too much already. I think it time the family benefit was restricted to the first two children. I agree with all that "Just a Taxpayer" has said. Don't these people read about world overpopulation. Yours etc, "Quality not Quantity"[109]
>
> Rather than collecting signatures Mrs Truman would do better to plant a hedge. Perhaps she takes the view that she is too busy with preschoolers and husband with recreations to plant hedges. Yours etc, C Albie.[110]

The editor gave the final word to "Ned": 'it does not matter how many children people in state houses have, the fences should be high enough to keep them safe', before closing correspondence on the subject.[111] By 1973 some members of the public appear to have been convinced that state house tenants were lazy, welfare dependent and had too many children which they could not control.

The state rental houses had been the showcase of New Zealand's welfare system had by1973 become shabby. The processes whereby successive governments lost interest in state housing as an integral part of mainstream housing policy were in place after 1950.[112] As home ownership became the normal form of tenure for middle income families, state housing increasingly became associated with those low-income families which had previously been excluded from consideration as tenants. In the immediate

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[108] The Press, 30 January, 1973, Ibid.
[109] The Press, 1 February, 1973, Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] State houses, which had represented 45% of all housing permits issued in 1940, fell to less than 10% of all permits in the years between 1960 and 1970. The New Zealand Official 1990 Yearbook, p.164.

post-war period, the association between state housing and social welfare operated to reward the Returned Servicemen's and other deserving, respectable young families. In time and by 1973 the social welfare associations of state housing identified its tenant families (rightly or wrongly) as poor, undeserving, unrespectable; beneficiaries, low income groups and large families. The housing policies of successive governments in the years between 1950 and 1973 had, by continuing to advance home-ownership, contributed to the idea that tenants were social failures, by refusing to acknowledge and cater for the changes that had occurred in families or the subsequent changes in their economic circumstances.

Chapter 6

Ideal and 'Problem' Families: 1955-1973

This chapter examines the experiences, through interviews, of state house tenants and their children from the years 1955 to 1973. Housing shortages continued to affect young families. State house building, as a proportion of the total of new houses built, had slowed down during this period. Because many of the original tenants from the immediate post-war period had not yet either vacated or bought their state houses, older houses were not often available for the new tenants. Most of the new tenants interviewed commenced their tenancy in new houses. These new tenants who were allocated the new houses, tended to fulfil the Housing Corporation's criteria of ideal tenants, as young couples with children. In this study two families fell into the Housing Division's definition of Problem Families', and were allocated older houses. Between 1955 and 1973 the age groups of interviewed tenants changed from being young couples with children to a wider range of age groups. Couples with young children were housed among established tenants with older children and teenagers.

Material from the interviews with the children of tenants is not necessarily directly specific to the experience of state housing tenants, but could apply to the experiences of many post-war children.[1] It is, however,

[1] I have avoided using the term 'baby boomers' as it encompasses too wide an age grouping. The Statistics New Zealand's publication suggest that the 'baby boomers' were born between the period 1946 and 1965. My

grounded in the context of a remembered state house tenancy. The interviewees' insights, especially those of the children, have shaped the content of this chapter. Because state housing areas had a higher concentration of children than other established suburbs this concentration makes the context of the children's experiences unique to their environment.[2] The overwhelming impression given by the adult tenants in chapter 4 was that their tenancy experience shared more similarities than differences with those images depicted in the publication, State Housing in New Zealand. Their children, whose interview material forms much of the content of this chapter, responded differently. They had been happy, well fed and cared for as children. Adolescence and the 1960s often coincided, and bringing with it a set of pressures, conflicts, challenges and choices that demanded new responses.

This chapter reveals the quiet erosion of the ideals of state housing. The children interviewed expressed an awareness of this. The interviewees' recollections reveal that although the physical environment of suburban state housing remained unchanged, the ideas relating to state housing tenants and the tenants themselves had changed. Post-war housing and ideas about families became increasingly difficult to marry from the mid-1960s on.

Whereas all the interviewed tenants of the immediate post-war period had been Pakeha, this pattern did not continue. Two interviewees, who had lived in Oamaru and Dunedin from the mid 1950s as children and teenagers, were Maori. The Christchurch interviewees were all Pakeha.

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sample of tenants who were children and teenagers in these post-war years were all born before 1958. New Zealand Now - Baby Boomers,

[2] Schrader, 'Planning Happy Families', p58.

Christchurch respondents were aware of Maori families living in state houses from the 1960s. That they were only able to identify one or two families in their areas suggests that Maori did not form a significant proportion of the state housing population. Other towns may have had different ethnic structures. For example, AH, born in the forestry town of Tapanui, recalls that town had mostly Maori tenants.[3] He thought that Maori families lived in state houses in those areas that relied extensively on Maori labour, such as forestry and meat processing. Similarly, FW from Oamaru, had Maori friends and neighbours who lived in state houses.[4] Their families were employed in the nearby Pukeuri Freezing Works. AH's and FW's memories of the ethnicity of tenants in Tapanui and Oamaru suggests that Christchurch was late to admit Maori into state housing.

After 1955 transit camps continued to provide urgently needed shelter for families waiting to find permanent accommodation. In 1957 Mrs P accidentally started a fire in the kitchen of the house that she, her husband and twin baby boys shared with the elderly woman who owned the house.[5] Alhough no one was hurt in the fire, Mrs P and her family felt unable to enter into another 'boarding the owner' arrangement, and decided that their best option would be to go to the Harewood transit camp. They did this in the belief that residence there would shorten their time on the waiting list for a state house. Transit camp was not the enjoyable experience it had been for the respondents from the immediate post-war period. Mrs P had as little to do as possible with other campers. She thought they were gossips and did not want to contribute material for

[3] AH, taped interview, 20 October, 1997.
[4] FW, taped interview, 9 October, 1997.
[5] Mrs P., taped interview, 11 September, 1997.

their gossiping. Gael Feguson suggests that the allocation committees did regard a period spent at the transit camps as a test of worthiness for state housing as the State Advances Corporation had removed people from the waiting lists if they had not proved to be sufficiently desperate for housing to go into the camps.[6] Mrs P and her family must have been found worthy of a house, because they eventually got a brand new house in the Emmett Block shortly after their third son was born. Another son followed soon after and Mrs P found herself at the age of 25 with four boys under three years old. Politicians' allegations that potential state house tenants at this time were learning how to 'work the system' are not confirmed in Mrs P's experience. Their housing situation had been quite desperate.

When Mrs R applied for a state house in 1964 she waited eighteen months before she could move into their new house in Wainoni.[7] Mr and Mrs R and their child did not consider themselves badly housed before this, but Mrs R wanted a better and newer house. She knew that a state house was good quality, reasonably priced and better value for their money than renting a similar house in the private sector. Ideally they would have liked to build a new house of their own, but could not see how they could afford to do this. However, Mrs R's husband felt that a state house was beneath him. As Mrs R explained:

> State houses were looked on as being homes for people who couldn't get themselves a home, He thought there was something wrong with people who couldn't get themselves together enough to get their own home.[8]

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[6] Fergusson, Building the New Zealand Dream, p.174.
[7] Mrs R., taped interview, 20 October,1997.
[8] Mrs R.

Mrs R's husband felt that living in a state house implied financial irresponsibility, and an inability to provide for his family. Mrs R did not share this view and just wanted a decent house that they could afford. She did not count herself as having 'something wrong' with her, as she felt that she would not live in a state house all her life. She thought that eventually 'we were going to get out and get something of our own'.[9] State housing was the logical option for her because she wanted to be decently housed in the immediate future, and not when they could finally save enough money to buy their own home.

From Mrs R's relatively short period on the waiting list, compared with those of respondents from the post-war period, the housing shortage had been mostly resolved by 1964 (in Christchurch at least). State housing in the years between 1955 and 1973 was reasonable to rent. W S, from Dunedin, said that in the late 1950s their house cost their parents 7/6d a week rising to 10/6d from a wage of nine pound a week.[10] These figures may not be representative of other parts of New Zealand. Other evidence suggests a higher figure for rent may have been more accurate.[11] Mr and Mrs Y's original tenancy agreement of 1953 has been based on a rental commitment of 20% of their weekly wage, which they had considered to be reasonable.[12] Young couples such as Mrs P and Mrs R were anxious to get a state house because the rents were considered reasonable. Home buyers and private sector tenants may have had a basis for their resentment if low rents such as those reported by WS were accurate.

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[9] Mrs R.

[10] This equates to 75 cents and $1.05 for rent from a wage of $18.00 a week. WS, information from a fact sheet given at a taped interview, 3 September,1997.

[11] Ferguson, Building The New Zealand Dream, pp 222-223.

[12] Mr and Nrs Y, taped interview, 8 September, 1997.

If the housing problem had been mostly remedied for young couples with small families, this did not mean that much had been done to remedy the situation for large and so called 'problem families'. In 1964, Mrs J returned to her home town of Ashburton with her husband and four children to housekeep for her brother and elderly, confused father.[13] Mrs J's parents had successfully called on the assistance of a member of the Allocation Committee in 1949 to get a state house. Her father was an existing tenant. In these circumstances, Mrs J found it easy to get the necessary single-floor house, but a four-bedroom bungalow was unavailable. The family slept eight people, four adults and four children, in three bedrooms. When asked how they coped, Mrs J responded that it was not difficult. The single men, her father, brother and son slept in the largest room; she and her husband and youngest child were in the next largest room, and the other two children in the smallest room.

Even after the Minister of Housing had claimed in 1960 that the housing problem was being 'rapidly overcome', the families loosely defined as 'problem families' were still facing an average of two years on the waiting lists for allocation.[14] After they transferred from a state house in Tapanui, AH's family split up for some two years. Some of the children, including young AH, stayed with relatives in Invercargill, while his parents rented a house in Dunedin, waiting for a four or five-bedroom state house to become available for their 13 children. They got a four-bedroom house in 1964 where conditions were so cramped that two of the oldest boys slept in the garden shed.[15]

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[13] Mrs J, taped interview, 2 September, 1997.
[14] Bay of Plenty Times, 16 August, 1960, 'Press Clippings, Ministerial Policy', 1/4, Housing Division, National Archives.
[15] AH.

L and SM's state house allocation in 1970 was an important event for their family. Mrs M had fled her violent husband after he had repeatedly tried to kill both his wife and their six children. Although S and L were young at the time, they well remembered the violence and the fear. After their mother left the marriage they also remembered the difficulties she faced. Help from church organisations, and in particular the Salvation Army, was not forthcoming. According to L, the Salvation Army held the opinion that L's mother had no business to ask for help. The church had no sympathy, or help, for women who had 'deserted' their husbands, regardless of the circumstances. Mrs M went to Hororata, in North Canterbury to live in an old cottage on a relative's farm. The four boys were placed in Cholmondely Childrens' Home until the family was settled. Mrs M and the children lived on the farm for two or so years, while thay waited for a state house to become available. The M's four-bedroom house in the Emmett Block was not new, but possibly eight or ten years old when the family moved in. The family was thrilled by it. S described it as 'the flashest thing, Oh, it was big and modern, – amazing.'[16] In 1970 electric stoves and flush toilets represented the epitome of modern conveniences to a family who had been living in a damp cottage with a wood stove and a 'long drop' toilet. Their furniture and clothing were all 'hand-me-downs', but the M family were excited at the possibilities in their new environment. Mrs M had been able to obtain an Emergency Benefit. She soon got a job as a tea lady, where the hours and holidays coincided with the children's schooling. Life continued to be hard for Mrs M, but her family was safe. Their state house, although not new, was better than anything they had ever lived in previously. The security it offered was a relief after the family's difficult past. The long wait the H and M families experienced, with their families scattered,

[16] SM, taped interview, 10 October, 1997.

indicate that allocation remained a problem for large families, and especially for those families that did not meet the Allocation Committees' narrow view of the ideal tenant.

Several of the families interviewed, in the years after 1955, were large compared with those from the period between 1936 and 1955. Other families, such as Mrs I's, had started small and grown to become large families in these years. Conditions were often cramped for family members. LO found that by the time she was ten, her family's three-bedroomed house was accommodating nine people. LO was very pleased when a space large enough for her bed was found behind the front door in the hallway. She felt she had a room all for herself. LO's mother, Mrs I, seemed philosophical about the crowding. She considered that the congestion would not last for long, for the older children would soon be leaving home. Mrs I was right. LO left home at fifteen, soon after she started working.

The problems caused by more people living in a house than it was designed to accommodate could be attributed to two different factors. The first was that families, such as the I family, who moved into a smaller house, in time had more children than the house could comfortably accommodate. Secondly, the lack of state houses that could accommodate large families was the reason that the houses of Mrs J's, AH's, and L and SM's families were crowded. The Housing Division had initially been unwilling to build many four and five-bedroom houses It had wanted to encourage tenancy from the ideal families with two or three children, not those with 'tribes'.[17] However, as larger houses became more readily available, the larger families interviewed did not move on to these bigger

[17] Mrs D.

houses. Although state houses were small, they were not necessarily smaller than other new housing built at a similar time – conditions were not necessarily more cramped for tenants than for those in similar, privately-owned houses. The 1954 Mazengarb Report had noted that many 'houses in the new areas are often too small' and that overcrowding caused many teenagers to 'seek their pleasures' away from home.[18] Getting out of the house, especially in the evenings, was an important means of escaping the crowding at home for the children interviewed from larger families. LO and her sisters claimed the garden shed as their private refuge. L considered that the crowding at her home had been a factor in her decision to leave home as young as she had.

Responses varied to the question on how the children had adjusted to the crowded conditions. A H, from the family of thirteen children, was aware that his parents, tired after a hard day's work and wanting a little peace and quiet before bedtime, were intolerant of the fighting between older children.

> If somebody had a gripe with somebody it soon affected everyone in the house. Usually Mum or Dad would get involved and that was when you'd end up getting a good smack.[19]

The boys said they thought that the lack of space had not been such a problem when they were younger, but had possibly contributed to some of the fights that they had had with their brothers when they grew older and personal space became more important to them. KA, LM and AH all remembered fights that resulted in damaged walls and doors as teenage boys battled out their grievances.

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[18] Mazengarb, Report on Moral Delinquency, p.30.
[19] AH.

Some of the girls had felt the bathroom was a source of conflict among larger families, especially when they became teenagers and wanted, needed and were denied access to it. That the bathroom and toilet were often in the same room in newer state houses would not have helped ease this situation. Some of the families had rigid rules and rosters governing the bathroom's use. In some state houses the third bedroom was a 'sunroom': a smaller room without a built-in wardrobe. This room was most often reserved for the boy or boys of the family, who had less use for wardrobes. However JS, who shared the middle-sized bedroom with her two sisters, remembered the contention over their shared wardrobe's limited space. Vertically stacked bunk-beds were frequently resorted to as a way of sleeping several children to a room. SA, as the only daughter of six children, always had the luxury of her own room. She said bunk-beds always reminded her of state housing as her brothers' bedroom and her friends' bedrooms were crowded with them.

Two interviewees had also noticed that families in state houses seemed to have become larger in the years after 1955. DV, from Dunedin, and KA, from the Emmett Block, identified the appearance of larger and poorer families in the 1960s as a change they witnessed in their neighbourhoods. Larger families placed a considerable financial strain on the family breadwinners. Many of the larger families' home-ownership ambitions were postponed, sometimes indefinitely, as a result of immediate family needs. Mrs I and her husband, tried several times to buy their own house or a neighbouring house, but with seven of her own children and several fostered children, they were never able to. Mr and Mrs D postponed buying their houses until their children had left home. SA, who had grown up in state houses, married at the age of 23. Soon after this, she bought a house with her husband at the same time as her parents bought their first

house. She found it amazing that her parents had taken 30 years of marriage to achieve home ownership, when she had been able to do the same within a year. She attributed this to the fact that she had not had the six children her parents had.[20] SA's parents, Mrs and Mrs D, could have capitalised their Family Benefit for a deposit on a house. They did not because they believed that that was not what the benefit was for. They believed the Family Benefit was for the children's benefit. To use that money to buy a house they thought was wrong, as the purchase would have benefitted them as parents, more than the children.[21]

Interviewed tenants were not asked why they had not bought their houses, as this would have been an indelicate subject given that state house tenants had been identified by politicians for some time, as financially irresponsible and lacking in 'will' or 'desire' to advance themselves. However, tenants raised the issue of home ownership themselves, and did so in a way which suggested that they were well aware of the political rhetoric. Mrs R was aware of the irony of state house tenants' perceived status as financially irresponsible. Both she and her husband worked. She also noticed that most of the families in her neighbourhood had two incomes. They all lived sober, industrious lives. Mrs R jokingly said that 'we should all be millionaires by now!'[22] Mrs R was well aware that the Protestant work ethic, as a sure means to wealth, was a myth. In her neighbourhood sober habits and hard work were essential habits for getting by. Getting ahead, and this was synonymous with the purchase of a home, seemed impossible. The tenants, who according to the politicians should have found it easy to buy a house, had

[20] SA, taped interview, 24 September, 1997.
[21] Mr and Mrs D.
[22] Mrs R.

given a lot of thought to this issue and had thoughtful explanations as to why they had not done so. These explanations indicated that they were aware of the pressure to buy a house, and also that not buying suggested that they, as tenants, were perceived to be inferior in some way to home-owners.

Responses to this issue took different forms. Mr and Mrs Y's carefully thought out statement implies that they felt a sense of moral superiority in *not* having bought their house.'We were so grateful and thankful to have a brand new state house. The house belonged to someone else but it's in your care to respect it so that it could be handed on to another generation that needed it.' Mrs Y went on to say that she compared having a state house with being a parent. 'Your children are entrusted into your care and you look after them to the best of your ability'.[23] Her daughter JS added later that her mother had told her she had felt it was more important for the family to be happy and well cared for and have 'nice things' than face the stress of meeting mortgage payments each month.[24] Mr and Mrs Y had tried several times to buy their house and had either not been able to service the debt, or felt that to do so would reduce their living standards to a difficult level. On one occasion it seemed as if the purchase was going to proceed smoothly. Then the Ys found that the sale price of the house and land did not include the connection costs of the sewage pipes. State house residents in the Bishopdale area waited ten years before their toilets were connected to a sewage system. The purchaser of a state house was expected to prepay the connection costs of the proposed system. Again, the additional amount of money involved moved the goal of home-ownership further away from Mr and Mrs Y.

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[23] Mrs Y.

[24] JS, taped interview. 10 September, 1997.

Mrs W loved their house and wanted to buy it.[25] The house was sheathed in 'fibrolite', a relatively new asbestos/cement wall cladding used in place of weatherboard as a solution to post-war timber shortages.[26] When she and her husband tried to buy their house they were advised that the exterior would need constant painting otherwise the 'fibrolite' would deteriorate rapidly. The only other affordable house in their neighbourhood was also built of experimental material – in this case poured cement. It was cold and ugly. The Ws stayed on where they were, and in time found the advisors were wrong. 'Fibrolite' proved to be a very durable cladding. Mrs W said that she was glad in some ways that she and her husband had not bought their house. Recently half of her section had been cut off to build another state house on. She was not sorry. As an elderly widow, she had been finding the large section hard to manage. Mrs W, like Mrs Y, had decided not to dwell on the negative associations of state rental tenure, but rather to find the positive features of it.

Most of the respondents who were married couples in the late 1950s had wanted to buy their houses. They were aware that there would be sacrifices involved. Some said that they did not mind making sacrifices and going without, but they did not feel it was appropriate for their children to make sacrifices in order for their parents to have their own home. For others, owning their home was a way of publicly indicating their social values; these ideas expressed values with puritanical

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[25] Mrs W.

[26] The Housing Division instructed architects that because timber was hard to get for wall sidings, asbestos wall and roof material had been approved as a substitute. Although it was not considered aesthetically attractive, it was necessary to use it in order to to maintain construction targets.' 'Instructions to Architects' Acc 1353, 7/10/4, Housing Division, National Archives.

associations, such as thrift, hard work and the idea of 'getting ahead'. The decision to buy, or not to buy, involved aspects of moral righteousness. Whether or not those who purchased had accurately caught the flavour of the political rhetoric which promoted home-ownership is unclear. Mrs H strongly felt that the only reason that they had been able to buy their house was through hard work and self sacrifice. 'We sacrificed to buy, we went without to pay our house off....We worked our butt off.' [27]

If the great social divisions of the preceding years had been based on ideas of 'respectable' versus the'rough' amongst state house tenants, it appears that the social division in these years was to become one based on ideas associated with owned or rental house tenure. The impact of this social division was to associate those who did not buy their state or other houses with negative qualities. State house tenants, who had previously prided themselves on being respectable by virtue of the fact that they were state house tenants, were now faced with the necessity of buying a houses to confirm their respectable status. Some of the older tenants, who had spent their lives working hard to keep up clean and respectable appearances, became associated with socially despised values associated with state house tenancy because they had been unable to buy a house. Tenants who did not become home owners gave considered explanations as to why they had not bought their houses. This indicated that they were acutely aware of the social stigma that had become associated with state house tenancy.

The pursuit of respectability was still a dominant feature in the lives of the women in the early 1960s. Even when there was no possibility of buying one's house, it was still important to present the house as owner occupied.

[27] Mrs H.

Mrs P, the mother of four young boys, also had an unhelpful husband. She was acutely aware of the social stigma attached to state house tenure. Her new house fronted on to an unfenced stream with steep banks. Each house shared a bridge access to the street with a neighbouring state house. Accross the street was an area of privately-owned homes. Mrs P was not enthusiastic about gardening but did enough to keep the section tidy. She had grown up believing that men did the work outside the house while women did the work inside. Her attempts at maintaining a garden were scuttled by the ravages of her four boys' games. The lack of front fencing and the inadequate back fences meant that the children, when small, were often able to run away. Yet, to Mrs P's disgust, neighbours were of no help in trying to locate them. This unhelpfulness on the neighbours' part was interpreted by Mrs P to mean that she should have been more able to control them. At one stage Mrs P was desperate enough to tie the boys to the clothes line so they could play outside without running away. On another occasion the boys got a rash. The doctor said it was scabies. This diagnosis made Mrs P furious because scabies was associated with dirt. She knew how hard she tried to keep the boys clean and tidy. She did not accept the diagnosis and insisted that tests be done. The rashes turned out to be an irritation from mites the boys had come into contact with by playing in the creek.

Mrs P was repeatedly frustrated at attempting to keep the children clean and under control. She was aware that the neighbours, especially those across the street in privately-owned houses, 'looked down their noses on the state house tenants' and judged her harshly for not being able to keep the four boys under control at all times.[28] These neighbours made her feel ashamed of living in a state house. These home owners had tried to stop

[28] Mrs P.

state house development in Mrs P's part of the Emmett Block because they had claimed that the state houses' proximity devalued their privately-owned houses. In order to forestall her critics, Mrs P thought that she had to keep up the standard of appearances set over the street. Eventually, the stress became too much, and her health broke down. The boys were put in Cholmondeley Children's Home for some months until she was able to cope with them again.

Another respondent gave an example of the way in which he remembers appearances as an indicator his mother's housekeeping standards and moral values. In Blenheim, MH was aware of standards which governed his presentation in public.

> I never felt that I looked rough. Mum wouldn't have it! You know you had to be done up to the nines to go to church – to go to school you had to be turned out properly. You went anywhere you had to look your best. She didn't want you letting her down. We were an extension of her. Yeah, they were going to judge her on how we looked.[29]

MH has not specified who he perceived his mother's judges were, but it can be assumed that they ranged from the Sunday school teacher to the neighbours. M H and his siblings acted as a shop window for their mother's high moral and housekeeping standards; any suggestion that the children looked rough would indicate otherwise.

Indicators of social respectability or status were seen in other areas. When young, the children were not especially conscious of ideas of relative wealth or poverty. However, with age, they did become aware that state housing tenure had come, especially in the 1960s, to carry a stigma associated with low social status. Two groups of parents amongst the

[29] MH, taped interview, 14 October, 1997.

respondents chose schools other than their local schools for their children. Mr and Mrs D placed their children in Catholic schools in the various locations where they lived. These schools were not in their immediate neighbourhood. They thought that this was to their children's advantage. Not only did they then have the opportunity to make friends from beyond their neighbourhood, but the Ds also thought that getting out of the state housing area was good for the children in other respects. The Ds were happy for their children to play with local children, but they also wanted their children to know, and be comfortable in, a wider social environment.

A Christchurch family elected to follow a family tradition and send their boys to Christchurch Boys High School. Both H and PM grew up in Northcote, an area which was beginning to show the symptoms of neglect in the early 1960s, exemplified in unmown lawns and abandoned car bodies. The Ms grew up to believe that they were socially above the neighbours. The idea of 'common' as opposed to 'respectable', was used in the M household to indicate social status.[30] The local children went to the co-educational Papanui High School. The M boys biked in the opposite direction, past large, privately-owned houses where their relatives lived, to Christchurch Boys' High School. In the weekends their chosen sports also reflected different suburban interests. The M boys played 'respectable' Rugby Union while their friends played Rugby League.[31] As the boys became teenagers their new school friends and sporting interests drew them away from their old friends in Northcote. P and H's parents were the poor relations of a well-to-do Christchurch family. When the family visited relatives in Fendalton they were driven home in a relative's car. The relatives never returned the visits to Northcote. PM thought that

[30] HM, telephone interview, 10 September, 1997.
[31] HM.

the reason for this was that his parents may not have extended the invitation, as they did not consider their state house was suitable for entertaining.

Both P and H, when interviewed, were aware of a sense of social displacement in both Fendalton and Northcote. Although they had been brought up in a state housing area, their parents, education, sporting interests and relatives had combined to give them a set of values which identified them as 'respectable'. In a seemingly contradictory statement, HM, in a published interview, was quoted as saying: Yeah I'm a working class guy. There were six kids in our family and I'm from a state house and I've always had a chip on my shoulder.[32] When asked why he had a 'chip on his shoulder', his response indicated that although he described himself as working class, his education and family background probably positioned him as middle class. His 'chip' was one of defensiveness about the undeserved social stigma unfairly attached to state house tenants. As an adult H had rejected his parents' ideas of respectability and consciously decided to identify his background as working class.

H and P's parents differed from the interviewed sample in that they were outspoken in their perceived social status. Respectability is not a fixed quality, but a relative status. P and H's parents, whose state housing positioned them as less respectable than their Fendalton relatives, felt that they were more respectable than their neighbours, who in turn considered themselves to be respectable. The other tenants interviewed believed that they were respectable, but did not claim to be more respectable than their immediate neighbours. They may have quietly thought they were, but to

[32] 'Cucumber Kid Cools It', New Zealand Listener, 9 August, 1997, pp26-27.

claim so would have have marked them as snobbish. Such a claim would also have been a betrayal of the egalitarian ideology which dominated New Zealand society in the years preceding the mid-1960s. The ideology of an egalitarian society was easier to maintain when visible expressions of wealth were difficult to achieve. However, as the country recovered from the war and as New Zealand's economic conditions improved, it became possible to demonstrate markers of social status in other ways than a beautifully-kept front garden.

The tenants and their children spoke possessively and with pride about their section of the street. Other tenants and areas nearby, 'around the corner', 'down the other end', or 'over the road', were spoken of as 'rough'. This word was frequently used by respondents to indicate neighbours who did not share their sober, hardworking lifestyles. Interviewed tenants expressed the conviction that their particular street portion was respectable. The 'rough' end of the street was the unfamiliar end of it. Although the idea of 'rough' was apparently used to express the opposite to the idea of 'respectable', the possibility exists that tenants were expressing the idea of comfort and ease within their environment. Areas and people with whom they felt comfortable were 'respectable'; whereas areas and people the tenants were not comfortable with were 'rough'. Although the pride that tenants took in their portion of the street could indicate neighbourly loyalty, it could also indicate a level of satisfaction with their immediate neighbours. Being a good neighbour, and my interviewees would have wanted to see themselves as this, involved sharing a sense of camaraderie with their neighbours.

The tenants felt safe in their particular street and immediate area. An example of this comes from LO and SM in the Emmett Block . LO, who

lived in Riselaw Street in the Emmett Block, became reluctant to go down to the Acheson Avenue shops after she was robbed of her mother's groceries. On another occasion, a teenage girl called 'Scarface' followed her home from the same shops and threw clods at her. She felt that the streets beyond the shops were inhabited by rougher families where children were allowed to 'run wild'.[33] On the other hand, S M, who lived just beyond the Acheson Avenue shops would not go down the Riselaw Street end of the Emmett Block as she felt that there were some 'rough families' down there, whereas her end was quite safe.[34] It seems that the tenants felt comfortable in the streets that they were familiar with, but became distrustful of areas beyond this. This may help explain why many of the tenants bought or tried to buy their own state house rather than a house out of their immediate area.

While the respondents may have felt that owning their own home was a worthy goal in itself, many did not abandon their rented houses in order to achieve this. Seven of the interviewees either bought or tried to buy the houses they lived in. That these tenants either stayed or tried to stay in their suburbs suggests that the ideas of egalitarianism were important to their concepts of themselves. While the adults may have quietly felt that they were a little bit above their neighbours in terms of respectability, moving from the suburb may have marked them as having snobbish tendencies. When Mrs H talked of how their street had changed, she said that she thought that those who had moved away had done so because the area was not good enough for them, indicating with her body language that she felt that they were snobs.[35] When asked if she had felt there was

[33] LO.
[34] SM.
[35] Mrs H.

any differences economically and socially among her neighbours in their cul-de-sac, Mrs H had said they were 'all were on a par, nobody wanted to be any better'.[36] Within Mrs H's two statements are contradictory issues. While wishing to appear as good as her neighbours, Mrs H did not want to be seen as better, even if she quietly felt that she was. Others, such as the former neighbours who had moved away, were condemned by Mrs H as being snobs who had rejected the egalitarian ethos of the neighbourhood. For Mr and Mrs H, buying their rented state house appeared to have been a way that they could express both ideas of social mobility and egalitarianism in the one action.

Mrs H went out to work in 1957, two years before she and her husband bought their house. In so doing she contributed to the purchase of her house with her paid labour. Mrs H was the first of the tenanting mothers in my sample to perform paid work outside the home. Within her neighbourhood it was a normal pattern. As early as 1951 most of the women in her small cul-de-sac worked outside of the home. Prior to 1955, Mrs D had taken in dressmaking at home to make extra money. She said that many of her neighbours also tried to make money while working at home. Other women may have earned extra money doing similar home-based work and not mentioned it in the interview. This may have been a reflection on the way the question was asked, which was in terms of 'did you work *outside* the home?' This could have skewed the response, as the women may not have considered work, such as dressmaking or minding others' children, in that context. While some of the older women interviewed did not enter into paid employment outside the home, in the years after 1960, all of the younger married women did. The motivation to look for work appeared to have been prompted by economic necessity,

[36] Ibid.

although the degree of this is hard to determine. The children all said that they had been well fed and that while they may not have had much in the way of extras, they were always neatly dressed on Sundays at least, and adequately dressed for the rest of the week. The adults reinforced this observation, while still claiming that stretching the money throughout the week was difficult. PC was familiar with the reality of this. When items, such as toothpaste, ran out they were not replenished until payday. An extra wage helped shorten the time between paydays.

The youngest child starting school was the signal for these women to look for work. Mrs W went back to the clerking job she had had before she married. P and HM's mother also resumed work as a clerk when her children were all at school. Most other women found cleaning and housekeeping jobs and travelled miles (usually by bicycle) to do work for pay that both Mrs H and Mrs Y said was 'pitiful'. The energy some of these women put into getting to low-paid work indicates that they considered it to be an important aspect of their lives both economically and socially. It also indicates that these women had not necessarily accepted the ideal of the husband as the sole breadwinner and themselves as economocally dependent wives and mothers.

Caring for their husbands, children and houses was still the first responsibility of the women. Bev James' study of mill workers' wives in the forestry town of Kawerau offers insights into the ways in which women who worked outside the home did so around the constraints of their husbands' occupations. Their role as wives and mothers took precedence over their paid employment. High standards of housework were maintained, as the women were all too aware of public censure at any slip in housekeeping standards. Criticism was especially harsh

towards working mothers.[37] Shift work imposed further strains for women in Kawerau. Children, housework and paid-work were juggled around the husband's schedule. Kawerau's mill workers' incomes were broadly similar to those found in a state housing suburb; the houses were indistinguishable from those in state housing suburbs. In Kawerau, women went to great lengths to maintain the idea that the husband and father was the head of the family and its primary income earner. The evidence from the interviewed women who worked substantiates this pattern. In some families, it appears that the children, especially the girls, were expected to do extra work around the home.

Because FW's mother worked Monday to Friday and Saturday mornings, F and her older sister L, had to put the dinner on each evening and do the vacuuming and washing on Saturday mornings. F was not allowed out of the house on a Saturday until the housework was finished. This interfered with F's sports. Nor did any of her friends have as much housework to do as she had. Although her two brothers had to mow the lawns, this weekly chore did not equal the regular work the girls did. F was resentful of the extra work her mother's job placed on her. JS and her sisters were also allocated an extra task after their mother started working at her housekeeping job. They took it in turns to get up early each morning to make lunches for all the family.

When Mrs P first went out to work her four boys were at intermediate school. She found it impossible to cope with the extra workload and gave up the job. Mrs P had said that she was brought up to understand that boys did not work inside the house. Because of this, she may not have expected

[37] James, B., 'Mill Workers' Wives', in Cox, S., ed., Public & Private Worlds, 1987, p.107.

the boys to help around the house with the washing and meals. After the boys started high school, she learned to drive and then got a job she loved, cleaning at Burwood Hospital.[38] The extra money was essential for Mrs P. Her husband was an alcoholic and the children's Family Benefit had previously been her only reliable source of regular income.[39] Her job became very important to her. It gave her confidence in herself, a new group of friends, and a social life. Mrs P considered getting a job a turning point in her life. The and income allowed her financial independance (but certainly not freedom from financial worry). The external focus for her life helped her regain the confidence she had lost as a wife and mother.

Mrs P had sought paid work out of financial necessity and dissatisfaction with her unrewarding domestic role. It appears that these factors were also motivation to a greater or lesser extent for the other women who entered into paid employment. What is unclear is whether or not these women worked for basic necessities or extras. The division between necessity and luxury became blurred. The new consumer goods brought with them some time-saving benefits. A washing machine, for example, may have been necessary to create the time for paid work. WS's family considered the arrival of appliances in his family to be significant events. He had a list of the new items and the years in which they were purchased or installed. The first was a vacuum cleaner in 1956, followed by a telephone in 1958, a refrigerator in 1959, a washing machine in 1960, a television in 1962

[38] Mrs P taught herself to drive, but it was some time before she mastered turning a right hand corner She drove around the streets in the Emmett Block block, left hand turns all the way until she learned to turn to the right.

[39] Mrs P.

and their first car in 1964.[40] Items initially bought as luxuries quickly became essential items to maintenance of the home and family.

So called 'labour saving devices' often turned out to be a double-edged sword. While an appliance, such as a washing machine, cut the time spent on the chores from hours to minutes, there appeared a corresponding rise in the standard and frequency of the work. The cult of domesticity which exhorted women to have 'whiter whites' ignored the fact that women were joining the workforce to buy washing machines in order to achieve this, and then washing more often to achieve the standards of whiteness of the advertisements. Helen May has written that in these years women may have entered into paid employment in order to attain the images of perfect domesticity, promoted by magazines and other media. May points out that this highlights the contradictions that occured with the increased demand and use of labour-saving devices. The goods were expensive, and often beyond the capacity of average single-income households. The purchase of consumer goods could have been a motivating factor for women to venture out to work. May has proposed that the purchase of consumer durables promoted the idea, through advertising, of the perfect home, family and marriage. The image of a husband supplying sufficient income to support his economically inactive wife and children was promoted as the ideal. However it was in many cases the additional income provided by the women which made the advertiser's images of the ideal family home *appear* to be realised. The irony was that the reality required a wife in paid employment in low-income households.[41]

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[40] WS, material from an information sheet given to me at the taped interview, 3 September, 1997.

[41] May, Minding Children, Managing Men, p.112.

The consumer items also had a symbolic value as economic indicators. The interviewees who had been children, were asked about visible economic differences in their neighbouhoods. They were able to identify those families and children who appeared to have had more, or less money, by their spending habits. However, as children, they would not have known whether or not the goods were purchased with cash or through hire-purchase arrangements.[42] They were aware that some families had cars, some children had bikes, and that some were better dressed than others. Even as children, they were aware of which neighbours owned their houses and which did not. Those whose families did not have a lot of money felt the lack of bikes and cars keenly. SM wished that her mother had been able to afford a piano and lessons. Her friends went to Girl Guides and she would have liked to go too, but she knew better than to mention either to her mother. BL thought that the increase in consumer goods marked a shift of social values. Where prior to the 1960s an individual's values had been demonstrated as personal attributes, BL thought that during the 1960s values were often expressed in material form. Values were no longer about 'who you are', but had become, 'what you have'.[43] Home ownership was the most obvious example of this outward expression of values.

The erection of an aerial on a chimney, during the 1960s, was another outward expression of sign that a family had sufficient income to buy or hire-purchase a television set. This purchase affected the lives of all members of the family. The living room, which was large in comparison to other rooms of a house, became the television room. The kitchen, small

[42] Many of the new consumer items may have been bought through hire-purchase arrangements. It is not known if the respondents bought items on hire-purchace or not, as the question was not asked of them.

[43] BL, notes from an interview, 30 September, 1997.

and easily heated had previously been the evening living space for most families. When the houses were designed, television reception was not available in New Zealand, but the large lounge space seems to have anticipated its arrival, as this was the room that had been planned as the focal point for recreational activities. In practise, however, the lounge room was large, often cold and most often used for semi-formal entertaining at the weekends or as an individual retreat. It was seldom used by just the nuclear family during the week. The kitchen had been deliberately 'scientifically' designed to look more like a laboratory than a family room. This did not seem to make a lot of difference to families' preference for this room over the lounge.[44] The designers of state houses either did not understand, when they created the tiny kitchens with their dining alcoves, that many families preferred to spend their time in this intimate and cosy space, or, if they did, they were attempting to stymie this practice by creating a laboratory-like appearance to encourage the family to use the lounge as a family room.[45] The television set's arrival in the lounge, in the mid 1960s, meant this room became used most evenings.

L O found that the arrival of the television set in her family changed the way her family used both leisure time and space. The living room had formerly been the one room of their overcrowded house where the family could go to be quiet to read or relax. When the room became the television room, L's father was in charge of the television, and his

[44] Three of the interviews conducted were in tenants' state houses and took place in the kitchens. These tenants who showed me around their houses kept a formal lounge, and explained that the open fire made the room a bother to heat and they did not use the room often as a result.

[45] Ben Shrader considered that the large living room was a deliberate attempt by the planners to shift the 'social heart' of the house from the kitchen to the living room. 1993, p.66.

decisions governed what the family would watch or not watch.[46] In order to find a quiet space to listen to music or read, another space had to be found. This was not always easy. LO left home at fifteen to go flatting and feels that this was, in part, because she was desperate for some space of her own.[47] The arrival of television in this family had the effect of increasing the tensions associated with overcrowding, as it changed the function of the only room in the house that not in full-time use, to a space dominated by the television and her father's viewing choices.

The television's appearance in the house altered the way some families may have used the rooms in the house. Interviews with the children of the tenants revealed that it was the television's programming that altered their behaviour. The children reported that television changed the way they played after school. Outdoor activities declined, especially in winter, in favour of children's television programmes. The content of some of these programmes, especially those from the United States – such as 'The Lone Ranger', 'Robin Hood' and 'William Tell' – influenced children's games. BL was shocked by some of the early programmes from the United States. She remembers 'Dennis the Menace' as the child who did the most atrocious things and who was never punished; 'I Love Lucy' where the loudmouth housewife howled and wailed her way through each programme and still got her own way; and 'The Dick van Dyke Show', where everyone laughed and joked at everything while living in a fabulously modern house. Everyone appeared to drive huge cars, the houses were full of expensive things, and to top all this off, sex was

[46] A British study, by David Morley, into the viewing patterns of families showed that in almost all of the families studied the father controlled the television's off-on switch, volume and programme choice. Family Television: cultural power and domestic leisure, Routledge, London, 1986, p.161.

[47] LO.

suddenly in the living room when Elvis 'wiggled his bum'.[48] He completely fascinated B!

BL feels that her generation was completely turned upside down by the messages from television. It was quite revolutionary. She said that as children they went to the movies quite often and the movies' characters and themes, such as Davy Crockett, Tarzan or cowboys and Indians were incorporated into their games. The affect of television was different. BL thought that perhaps because the television was in their living rooms on an everyday basis, the content incorporated itself into their lives in a way that movies had not. The images contained a set of values and messages that were completely different to those that had gone before. Children could be naughty without being smacked or punished, and married women who were loudmouthed got their own way. Everyone appeared glamorous, drove a car, drank alcohol or smoked cigarettes. The United States appeared as a land of plenty. Tea suddenly seemed a dull drink in comparison to coffee. The United States did not appear to suffer from the depressing import restrictions which limited consumer choice in New Zealand. BL remembered that the only coffee available was a syrupy blend of coffee and chicory. BL thought the ideas expressed in the television's American programmes completely altered their values and behavior. She also expressed the view that parents seemed completely unable to help or understand what was happening to their children who were suddenly made aware of lifestyles from another country, different in many ways from New Zealand.

BL pinpoints television as the agent responsible for changes in children's and teenagers' behaviour. KA, from the Emmett Block, also noticed

[48] BL. notes from personal interview, 30 September, 1997.

changes in the 1960s. The streets were noisier: Alsatian dogs barked. The boys, as they grew to become young men, bought either a noisy car or an equally noisy motorbike. There were fewer young children in the neighbourhood, but many more teenagers and young adults. Mrs R suggested that by the late 1960s she felt a sense of unease while at the local shops.

> There were a lot of young people with nothing to do – they used to hang around in groups. I wouldn't have said they were intimidating. It just didn't seem right that they were hanging about street corners, being cheeky to people.[49]

From Mrs R's account it does not appear as if these teenagers were juvenile delinquents, but she found their behaviour to be disturbing. These teenagers, by being idle and cheeky in a public place, disturbed Mrs R's sense of respectable behaviour. Their appearance was one that appeared to reject the values of their parents' generation who considered it important to behave well in public at all times.

The prescriptive philosophy of childcare and its association with state housing had done little to cater for the needs of teenagers. Morally righteous commentary that echoed Plunket's discipline and control practices had appeared as the favoured response to disturbing teenage behaviour. The 1954 Mazengarb Report had been critical of changes in the behaviour of some adolescents. The report identified many factors it saw as responsible for the changes and promoted ideas that would enable the adolescents' behaviour to be controlled. Among these, the committee endorsed more sporting activities, religious instruction and for community halls to provide YMCA type activities. The report went on to exhort parents – and mothers in particular – to be more responsible about

[49] Mrs R.

controlling their adolescent children's behaviour.[50] These ideas found favour with and were practised by many parents.

David Ausubel in 1960 was surprised and disturbed by the authoritarian manner in which children were treated and of the prevalence of corporal punishment as a means to modify children's behaviour, especially when compared with practices from the United States. Ten years later J Ritchie and J Ritchie had also found that New Zealand children were raised in a punitive environment where 'many families display a generalising sterilising overwash of moralistic commentary which is designed to teach character'.[51]

Ausubel was also cynical about the way New Zealanders searched for a scapegoat for adolescent behaviour:

> Since it is inconceivable to them that serious moral imperfections could possibly originate within their own country, they tend to attribute all local evils, e.g., bodgieism, delinquency, interest in lewdness, sexual promiscuity, to undesirable overseas, typically American influences.[52]

Ausubel repudiated the idea that the United States was the source of adolescent evils, but it appears as if the general feeling among concerned adults was that this was the source. BL had been convinced that American television's messages in the 1960s had been a strong factor influencing boys to emulate those images, by stealing alcohol and cigarettes.[53] Only one of the respondents became involved in criminal behaviour as a

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[50] Mazengarb, Report on Moral Delinguency, pp 31-40.
[51] Ritchie, and Ritchie, Child Rearing Patterns, pp151-155
[52] Ausubel, The Fern and The Tiki, p.57
[53] BL.

teenager. He saw this as a reaction as a vulnerable teenager to a new environment.

When LM's family moved to their state house, they thought the Emmett Block in 1970 was 'pretty rough'.[54] Gangs of teenagers fought, women were raped and theft and burglaries were common. He was beaten on his first day at his new high school. His reaction to this was to conform to peer pressure and act in the same way as his new class mates. L admitted to having been involved in thefts. His large family had very little money and L found himself adopting the attitude where if he wanted something – cigarettes, alcohol, or a bicycle – he simply stole it. L thought that because he had left school at a relatively young age and got a job, which kept him away from his old friends and gave him money, he had escaped being caught by the police for any serious crime. It is not possible to link LM's behaviour with the impact of television and its messages. The object of the boys' theft, however, was cigarettes and alcohol. These items have been closely associated with socially disapproved male adult behaviour and a hedonistic lifestyle, and those items most likely to be strongly disapproved of by parents and those in authority.

During the 1960s some of the younger parents' behaviour relaxed and became less formal. Two respondents, Mrs P and FW, had Hawaiian bands in the family. They spent pleasant evenings and weekends playing music, singing and drinking beer with family and friends. Sundays at FW's house were regularly spent entertaining neighbours and friends. When F got home from Sunday school in the morning, she often found a party had spontaneously started, with music and drinking well under

[54] LM, taped interview, 29 September, 1997.

way.[55] The use of alcohol as an integral part of these parties,did not cause problems for FW and her family. Mrs P, however, found that her husband and neighbour's drinking habits caused her problems.

Both her husband, and her two neighbours on either side of her, were alcoholics. Mrs P had as little as possible to do with her neighbours, but found them hard to ignore as they were friendly with each other. The lack of front fencing enabled the neighbours to take a short cut through her property to each other's houses, rather than go the long way over the bridges. On one occasion Mrs P heard the neighbour's husband loudly arguing with his wife and her screams. Mrs P wanted to call the police, but her husband said, 'mind your own business'.[56] Mrs P's husband clearly felt that the neighbour had the right to do as he pleased to his wife in his own home and that his injunction not to call the police would be obeyed. Clearly he felt that their neighbour's fight was none of their business. On this occasion Mrs P did as she was told. However her husband's drinking did not help make her or the boys' life comfortable. Mrs P's confidence and independence had soared since she had started earning her own money and driving the car. She now had the courage to leave her husband. Having wanted to do this for some time, she had been prevented by doubts as to her own ability, her lack of money, and most importantly her lack of options. As she said: 'Where could you go? Who would have you?'[57] Mrs P found the answers in the early 1970s. She rented a house, and moved out with her four teenage boys, who, in time, grew from being 'holy terrors' into 'very nice young men'.[58]

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[55] FW.

[56] Mrs P.

[57] Ibid,.

[58] Sadly for Mrs P one son was killed in a car accident while in his early twenties.

Most of the younger interviewees were teenagers during the 1960s. This period coincides with the children questioning, evaluating and sometimes rejecting the attitudes and values of their parents. For some this occurred when they were confronted with a situation where they thought their parents' ideas and values were inappropriate and outdated. It seems that it was the children's encounters with situations out of the normal range of experience that they remembered clearly – signifying, perhaps, that these encounters may have indicated moments in their lives when they had to evaluate a situation for themselves instead of going along with their parents' explanations. Attitudes towards sexuality and its consequences, an undiscussed subject in many households, was, in particular, an area where different standards or values were exposed.

For instance, a neighbour's deviant behaviour caused LO to question her mother's judgement. L saw her childhood as being dominated by the maintenance of a respectable facade. Her family was heavily committed to the Christian principles of the Salvation Army. For her mother, this commitment extended to upholding their neighbour's respectability. A neighbouring widow's son was convicted of, and gaoled for performing indecent sexual acts on young boys in their neighbourhood. At a later date, L's family bought a set of drawers from the family and L, on cleaning it out, found a list of boys' names with ticks beside some of the names. When L showed this to her mother, Mrs I said, 'Don't worry about it, get rid of it.'[59] Some years later L asked her mother why she had not done anything about the list, her mother replied that although she had known what was going on with the paedophile and the boys, she had not thought it was her business to interfere out of consideration for the

[59] LO.

widowed mother. Mrs I's concern about the widow's respectability was, as L saw it, an aspect of her Christian charity for others. But L was confused by this. As she saw it, her mother had given the widow more consideration than she had given the boys' welfare.

Although speculative, Mrs I's reaction indicates that she may have been aware that the paedophile's widowed mother might have been held accountable for his actions. Both the Mazengarb Report in 1954 and A. E. Manning's 1958 study of 'psychological abnormalities' in adolescents espouse the view that good mothers, as the moral guardians of the home, had the power to prevent all sorts of social evils.[60] Conversely bad mothers were responsible for creating juvenile delinquents. Jan Horsfall has pointed out that the idea of blaming the mother and positioning her as the root cause of criminal behaviour has a history that can be traced to Freud.[61] The idea of 'pathological' mothers was well promoted in the 1950s and 1960s. These were the schizophrenogenic mothers who created, apparently without the help of fathers, schizophrenic offspring, especially sons. Mrs I may have been aware that the widow would have been blamed for her son's behaviour and have been trying to protect her from criticism.

Another speculative explanation for Mrs I's support for the paedophile's mother may lie in Margaret Tennant's hierarchical scale of status among women.[62] Tennant has shown that a widow had a tenuous grasp on

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[60] Manning, The Bodgie, pp 89-90.

[61] Horsfall, J., The Presence of the Past: male violence in the family, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1991, p.3.

[62] Margaret Tennant, in Paupers and Providers, pp104-105, discusses the status of women as respectable and 'deserving', or unrespectable and 'undeserving' recipients of charity, places them in an heirarchical scale. Widows, especially those with dependent children were the most

respectability because of her lack of a male partner. Mrs I's neighbour may have been more secure in her status because she had a son living with her. Without the son, the widow's position in the community may have been more vulnerable. In addition to this, Mrs I may have not wanted to expose the boys on the paedophile's list because of the embarrassment she may have caused them. She may have felt that it was appropriate to protect their privacy too. Whatever the reason Mrs I maintained her silence, this incident troubled LO. Her mother, for whom she had great respect, had behaved in a way she thought was wrong.

Another event, the occurrence of illegitimate children, was to alter Mrs I's and FW's families' relationships. More of the families interviewed could have had similar problems, but the information was not divulged. Illegitimate babies in some households was such a shameful event that immediate members of a family may have been unaware of sibling's, or a sibling's girlfriend's pregnancy. For some of the older generation of parents concerned, the subject would never be discussed and certainly not to a stranger in an interview. Changed attitudes towards unmarried mothers and adopted children have brought many stories to light. FW, for instance, had only found out some fifteen years after the event why her sister L had the name 'Lisa' tattooed on her.

When FW was about twelve she remembers saying to L that she had a big tummy. Her sister L had successfully hidden her pregnancy under her gymfrock which was worn, as was fashionable, with the belt at hip level and the tunic bloused out over her expanding tummy. L, aged fifteen at the time, stayed on at school until the baby was due to be born. F marvels

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'deserving' of charity, whereas the unmarried mothers of two or more children were the least 'deserving'.

at how the secret was kept. 'They didn't tell me anything, they just whipped her away in the school holidays and she had [the baby] down in Dunedin.'[63]Although the evidence of L's 'fall' was successfully hidden and the baby adopted to strangers, L became unhappy and resentful of her treatment. She left home soon after these events and became involved with, and then addicted to, drugs. Some four years later, in the early 1970s, F too became pregnant. This time her parents, who had been distraught at the outcome of L's pregnancy, arranged for F to marry the father of the child some weeks before the child was born. The marriage lasted long enough for another child to be born and F was again a single woman by the time she was twenty.[64] L's pregnancy occured in 1966, in a small conservative South Island town. By the early 1970s the ways in which many people viewed teenage pregnancies were changing. Solutions to the problem, other than stranger adoption or a 'shot-gun' marriage, were becoming acceptable.

Mrs I only revealed the circumstances surrounding the birth of her youngest child, S, when it was discovered that I knew this daughter, and after the tape recorder had been switched off. However, during the interview, Mrs I was asked if there had been any unmarried mothers in their area from the late 1960s. She said that there had not been, and offered her explanation of why not:

> Well, I don't think the mothers kept their children then because they got nothing for it. There was no DPB [Domestic Purposes Benefit] or any thing like that, so that they weren't able to keep their children, if they did they would have had to work or do something like that.[65]

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[63] FW.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Mrs I, taped nterview, 29 August,1997.

Mrs I was aware, first hand, of how little the Salvation Army's charity would do for those women or their children who were without a husband, unless they were widows. Because of the mutual connection with the youngest daughter S, I was able to interview another sister, LO and get another perspective to the circumstances of S's birth. LO remembers that when she was about ten years old she was teasing M, the older sister, that she was fat enough to be pregnant. A terrible silence fell. Everyone except M was sent to their rooms. M was indeed pregnant. Mr and Mrs I were terribly shocked and humiliated. L thought that they could not believe, or understand why, their daughter could do such a thing. Mrs I was an office-holder in the Salvation Army, a position that she felt she should, and offered to, resign from since one of their children had disgraced their family's standing in the church's community. M's attiitude did nothing to help the situation either. Instead of adjusting her demeanour to one that signified her shame, she adopted an aggressive 'Stuff you, I'll do what I want!' attitude.[66] The outcome was that some months later Mr and Mrs I adopted a baby daughter, S, and M went to the North Island to live.

Mrs I's statement cited above, provides a framework for understanding their daughter's situation, and an outcome that, if it did not suit everyone, was probably the most pragmatic and least painful solution. Before the introduction of the Domestic Purposes Benefit unmarried mothers found it extremely hard economically and socially to keep their babies. Mr and Mrs I were able to do what they considered the right thing by their daughter, the baby and their church. M was relieved of the maligned 'unmarried mother' status and the difficulties of bringing up her child on her own. There seems to have never been any question of M marrying the father of the child. The event was never a tightly-kept secret, and S cannot

[66] LO.

remember not knowing that her aunt was her biological mother. Further foster children followed, so S was never the youngest child of older parents. The I family's response to this situation, by taking personal responsibility for it, allows another way of evaluating Mrs I's reactions to the paedophile's mother. Mrs I wanted to preserve the widow's respectability, because the son's crimes could have been seen as the result of the widow's bad mothering. Mrs I may have felt that it was her fault that her daughter had become pregnant. Thus she should bear the responsibility for the grandchild and the disgrace.

It has been LO's analysis of her family and their mode of living that has given me the most help in understanding that the pursuit of respectability was the central motif that dominated her childhood, and thereby understand the importance of this issue to this research. Yet it is L's family, when threatened by the loss of respectability, adapted to the situation in a manner that was sensible, pragmatic and sympathetic. Stranger adoption may not have been an appropriate response given that M's pregnancy had not been kept secret. F's family in the same situation could not find a solution to her or her sister's pregnancy other than adoption or a quick marriage to preserve their daughter's and their respectability. Sufficient changes in the public perception of teenage pregnancy during this time may have contributed to the I family's less drastic solution. The I family lived in Christchurch, which, although still small and conservative, may have been, in comparison with Oamaru, sufficiently cosmopolitan to adjust to the situation.

Among the tenants interviewed, those who had moved into state houses in the post-war period found their personal circumstances and their neighbourhood environments changed from the late 1960s. Their children

were no longer economically dependent; some had left home. Many responded to these changes circumstances by leaving their state houses. New neighbours took their places. However, to the remaining residents, the new neighbours were not the same. They were younger, poorer and 'rough'. Many did not have husbands. They did not settle in for long tenancy periods as the previous generation had. Mr S described them as 'fly-by-night'.[67] By the 1980s Mr S had stopped trying to make the new neighbours' acquaintance, as it seemed to him barely worthwhile getting to know people who might not be there the next week. Mrs W felt the same way about her many new neighbours. She too gave up trying to maintain a nodding relationship with them. Apart from all else, the new neighbours did things differently. They did not keep their gardens as well as the older tenants did, or take the same pride in their houses. Abandoned car bodies were conspicuous, possibly more so than in other suburbs because state houses seldom had garages unless tenants had built them themselves.

Even the children were different. Mrs J, in Ashburton, did not allow her children to play outside of their section, 'I didn't believe in it'.[68] To have allowed her children out on the street would have been irresponsible. Her children would have been mixing with those children who were allowed to 'run wild'.[69] Twenty years earlier, many of the children had been encouraged to play outside on the street in the fresh air, exploring their wider neighbourhood. In 1973 the streets were no longer safe for children, cars and motorbikes were common, and the Alsatian dogs were not always chained up. The trees grew taller, the houses aged, but in most

[67] Mr S, taped interview, 25 September, 1997.
[68] Mrs J.
[69] Ibid,

respects had changed little other than having an occasional coat of paint. The houses and streets remained much the same, but the new tenants found it difficult to adjust to, and settle into their houses and make them homes for their families.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

State houses once represented the pinnacle of New Zealand's housing and welfare policies. The houses themselves, with their modern fittings, exemplified 'the plenty of the machine age', while their exterior form was reassuringly conservative and self contained. They had inside flush toilets as opposed to a long trek down the garden path, laundries instead of an outside wash-house, and modern fitted kitchens with an electric stove and hot-water system. Thousands were built in response to the urgent need to house those post-war families unable to build or buy for themselves. When new, they were highly sought after and seemed to embody most of what a family desired in a home.

The tenants interviewed who commenced their tenancy between 1937 and 1955 expressed satisfaction in their housing and environments. The interviews revealed that they remembered their experiences in similar terms as the images produced in the Housing Division's publicity material. Although this raises complex issues about the impact of mediated images on individual and collective memories, the tenants from this period did report living happy, hardworking and respectable lives. The images conveyed in the interviews did parallel those of the publications. The women embraced their roles as full-time wives and mothers. Most had small families of between two and four children. The women worked hard at keeping their homes and families.

Although the women lived in often badly serviced new suburbs, distanced from the support of their extended family and with young children and husbands away at work all day, they maintained a distance from their neighbours. The women were not on the intimate terms as could have been expected, given their mutual interests and circumstances. They considered themselves to be good neighbours; offering help in times of need, and usually welcoming neighbours' children to play in the back yard. The lack of intimacy, however, could be expected, given the planners' ideas of the private nature of the nuclear family that state housing had been designed to support. Tenants socialised with friends and neighbours outside of the home, at church and in community facilities, if these were available. Close friends and relatives visits were organised, semi-formal occasions, such as a Sunday roast-dinner.

The men worked hard, and often long hours. Some worked two jobs in order to support their families. Weekends were spent vegetable gardening, mowing lawns and trimming hedges. Most men, if they drank alcohol, did so sparingly. Their roles, as family breadwinners, were taken seriously. Their families did not have to compete against traditional male social pursuits, such as rugby and horse racing. The children were all raised with the guidance and services of the Plunket Society. The mothers were grateful for the Plunket nurses' visits and advice which prescribed rigid child-care practices in the belief that their observance would foster controlled and disciplined habits in the children – and subsequently, in adults. Children continued to be subjected to discipline as they grew older. Most often this took the form of corporal punishment. The children all went to Sunday school. Other than on Sunday mornings, the young children played, as the planners had envisioned, in their yards and when older, most explored and played in their neighbourhoods.

However, the planners' ideas of a 'large community whole' were resisted by the adult tenants who did not feel as uninhibited in public as their children. Tenants thwarted the idea of community space, by erecting physical barriers between the space they considered theirs, and the space they considered to be public. They maintained the private nature of the family home and extended that into the front of the house with fences, hedges, and plants. Within the house the famlies also rejected the planners' vision of the living room as family gathering place, using this room most often as a semi-formal entertainment room or a quiet retreat for individual family members. The dining table in the kitchen remained the social heart of the house. In most other respects, the interviewees conveyed the overwhelming impression that the planners of state housing had accurately catered for their ideas of how they wanted to live. Family tensions and problems were concealed within the house. In this way they remained the business of the individual families and not the neighbourhood's business. The interviewed tenant families closely resembled the ideal families the planners had envisioned would live in the new state houses. These tenants, as ideal tenants, had enjoyed living in an environment which had been planned with their lifestyles, values and aspirations in mind.

In the years after 1955, the families living in state houses changed. State housing continued to be an attractive option for newly-established, low-income young families. Respondents in the sample now two who had been the children of Maori tenants and a family whose mother had accessed their state house as domestic violence refugee. The families represented in this period were less representative of the ideal nuclear family; they were larger and poorer, Maori and Pakeha, and single

mothers. The suburban state household became increasingly difficult to sustain on one income and most of the women interviewed had commenced paid work when their children started school, to ease the situation. The suburban location of state housing, and the often inadequate transport facilities, did create problems for the women, but this was offset by the satisfaction they gained from their work.

Some couples used the extra money to purchase their houses. The adult respondents who had not bought their houses, demonstrated (unasked) an awareness of the ideas that promoted home-ownership as a virtue, and were anxious to explain the circumstances which had contributed to their failure to purchase their home. External standards of respectability continued to be important, more so when neighbours in privately-owned houses were quick to make judgements on a tenants' parenting skills. Children, particularly on Sundays, had to be well 'turned out'. Mothers felt they were judged on their children's appearance; anything other than respectable could attach the label of 'rough' or 'common' on the mother. Tenants' own perceptions of their social status identified theirs as 'respectable'. The tenants displayed a strong loyalty and generosity towards their neighbours and neighbourhoods, upholding their respectability, even when the evidence may have not quite supported this. 'Rough' was a status families spatially distant from their own shared.

The families growing larger and older during these years presented problems for the children, especially as they became teenagers. Space in the houses became limited. The boys, in particular, were aware that the tension created by having limited space often manifested itself in fights with siblings, and was then followed by a 'hiding' from a stressed parent. New state housing suburbs had more children than other established

suburbs; the children had no shortage of playmates in their areas. As the children grew into teenagers, they gathered around in groups after school and during weekends, apparently idle. One respondent admitted to having engaged in petty crime. The arrival of television was a factor many of the children identified as having been an important event in their lives. The television set changed the way in which the family used the lounge room. Formerly seldom used on other than semi-formal occasions, and as a quiet retreat, the lounge was now used every night. Invariably fathers controlled the programme choice, volume and off/on controls. The grown-up children interviewed considered that the television's content stimulated changes in the way they as children had played and behaved. The apparent excesses of material consumption displayed, and relaxed social conduct demonstrated in programmes from the United States, made their lives seem dull in comparison.

In the years after 1960, some of the parents' social behaviour became less formal. Two families regularly entertained informally with music, singing and beer. Excess alcohol consumption was the reason given by one respondent for her decision to leave her marriage, but she had left her decision to do this until the early 1970s, as before this time she would not have been able to do so. Other attitudes changed. Parents' attitudes, especially those concerning sexuality, were questioned and challenged. Two families had three daughters who became pregnant as unmarried teenagers, causing each family to cope with this in different ways. Their responses to their daughters' 'problem' pregnancies reflected an awareness of changing times and circumstances. Not only had the families themselves changed, as a result of the passing years, but new families moving into the neighbourhoods also changed. They behaved differently. They did not share a common pride in their tenancy, but expressed their

disdain for it. By 1973, state house tenancy was not an acknowledgment of respectability, but had become an acknowledgment of poverty and welfare dependence to some extent or another.

State housing had never been designed to cater for these changes in the tenant families. They were designed to appeal to young, Pakeha, small nuclear families within a frozen space of time. The planners had not looked to the future and anticipated the changing needs for space and recreational pursuits. They had not anticipated that women would only briefly find their roles satisfying as full-time wives and mothers, or that an extra income was necessary for the growing needs of a growing family. They had not considered that state housing would not always be for the same narrow type of family. Nuclear family housing did not cater for Maori and Pacific Islanders who preferred to live with an extended family. Nor was it suitable for beneficiaries, whether they were widows, single mothers, ill, disabled or elderly – all of whom found the houses difficult to heat and maintain.

New Zealand's state rental houses, the showcase of its social welfare system, were by 1973 becoming a feature of urban life that was demanding an explanation for its appearance. In the immediate post-war period, the role of state housing as an integral aspect social welfare, acted to reward Returned Servicemen's families and other respectable young nuclear families. By 1973, social welfare associations acted to malign the houses, its tenants and suburbs. The processes whereby successive governments lost interest in state housing as an integral part of mainstream housing policy were in place after 1950. The results of the Housing Commission's findings detailed the results, but failed to provide a useful direction whereby the situation could be redeemed.

A chance finding of this study needs to be reported. After completing the interviews, I realised that a large number of the children of state house tenants were single, divorced or separated from their first spouses. Some had remarried. This subject had come up in conversation and was not an interview question. It was not one that all respondents had discussed. Respondents were recontacted to check this information, and to discuss the marriages of their siblings, in order to gain a wider picture. The result of this was that, of the sixteen people interviewed who had been children of tenants, only four were still married to their first husband or wife. Statistics from The New Zealand Official Yearbook 1997 indicate that those who were aged between 35 and 44 in 1991 (the age group most closely fitting the respondents' ages) were those most likely to be divorced. However, about 60% of this age group in the national statistics were in the first and only marriage category, whereas in this sample it was only 25%. The siblings' experience suggested that if the wider family was taken into account, the number of siblings still in their first marriage was higher, at about 40%, but still much lower than the national statistics.

There are a number of problems with this finding. The first is that most of these divorces occurred after this study concludes. The second problem is that the sample group is much too small to deduce much other than 75% children of tenants' interviewed found their first marriage unsatisfactory. The best explanation for this finding comes from the qualities the respondents have shown. The children of tenants were interested in examining and analysing aspects of their childhood in order to understand themselves in the present. Responding to a request for interviewees may have had more appeal to those who have, in the recent past, given a great deal of thought to the processes that have shaped their present. This

intense self examination may often prompted by traumatic life events, such as divorce or separation. It may have been this which prompted them to come forward as subjects. It does remain, however, that among my respondents the proportion still married to their first spouse is small. Whether or not the children of tenants had unsatisfactory first marriages as a result of their state housing experiences is unknown.

Although state housing's tenants had changed in many respects between the first state house having been built and 1973, the houses themselves did not. The photographs taken in 1949 or 1950, and those taken in 1998, illustrate this point. Few fifty-year old houses remain as untouched by the passage of time and lifestyles as state houses have. The most significant external feature which has marked an accommodation to the changing needs of tenants has been the inclusion of wheelchair ramps on the houses of sickness and accident beneficiaries. In 1974 state houses and ex-state houses were clustered in with other lowest-value housing in Johnsonville.[1] This low-value ranking was not peculiar to Johnsonville and is repeated today in most towns and cities. The first state houses were built with a sixty-year life span in mind for insurance and depreciation purposes. This time is now up. It is a testament to how well the first houses were built; today many are still very sound, and although others are less so; most occupy valuable, generous sections. The state houses built between 1936 and 1950 are an anachronism in their present form, but the exciting possibility remains that they could be thoughtfully remodelled to cater for the needs of yet another generation of New Zealand families.

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